

# **Relations between Jewish and non-Jewish Germans 1933-1945: A case study in the use of evidence by historians**

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by

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## Table of Contents

Table of Contents .....	2
Table of Figures .....	2
Acknowledgements .....	3
Abstract .....	4
Introduction.....	5
Chapter One .....	10
Historians: Their Sources and Use of Evidence.....	10
The Problem of Source Selection .....	15
The Problem with Use of Evidence.....	27
The Failure to Use Other Valuable Sources .....	39
Chapter Two.....	51
Personal Narratives .....	51
Historians and personal narratives .....	52
What personal narratives can tell.....	64
Systematic analysis of personal narratives.....	69
Chapter Three .....	85
The Diaries of Victor Klemperer .....	85
Being Klemperer .....	87
Bartov's Klemperer.....	96
Heim's Klemperer.....	104
What Klemperer's Diaries Tell .....	117
Conclusion.....	139
Appendix.....	146
Bibliography.....	151

## Table of Figures

Figure 1: Violence against Jews: participants listed by Wildt.....	29
Figure 2: Incidence of loyalty/disloyalty in client/customer relationships (Limberg).....	76
Figure 3: Incidence of loyalty/disloyalty during all encounters with non-Jews (Limberg).....	77
Figure 4: Demonstrations of loyalty/disloyalty in existing relationships (Limberg) .....	78
Figure 5: Oral history samples: encounters with non-Jews .....	80
Figure 6: Encounters (101) with non-Jews over time: oral history samples, with trendlines .....	82
Figure 7: Encounters (128) with non-Jews over time: memoir samples, with trendlines .....	83
Figure 8: Klemperer as quoted by Bartov .....	98
Figure 9: Experiential emotive values assigned to Bartov's Klemperer quotes .....	98
Figure 10: Chronology of events listed by Bartov .....	100
Figure 11: Experiential values based on actual incident count in Klemperer's 1933-1945 diaries .....	101
Figure 12: Comparison: Bartov's sample of Klemperer's experiences/Klemperer's own account. ....	101
Figure 13: Klemperer: Encounters with non-Jews September 1941-June 1942 .....	111
Figure 14: Instances of provision vs. refusal in Klemperer's diaries 1933-1945.....	113
Figure 15: Provision and refusal throughout the years 1933-1945.....	114
Figure 16: Locations of encounters with trendlines.....	119
Figure 17: Klemperer's encounters with strangers (with trendline).....	120
Figure 18: Types of relationships with trendlines .....	121
Figure 19: Klemperer: The behaviour of strangers after the yellow star was introduced.....	122
Figure 20: The behaviour of strangers towards Klemperer during the entire Nazi period .....	123
Figure 21: Klemperer's experiences of encounters with strangers.....	123
Figure 22: 'Effect Assessment': Klemperer's responses to encounters with 'ordinary' Germans..	124
Figure 23: Classification of behaviours toward Jews in Klemperer's diaries .....	126
Figure 24: Comparison between Behaviour and Effect assessments .....	127
Figure 25: Averages obtained by combining Effect Assessments and Behaviour Assessments ..	127
Figure 26: Apparent motives of non-Jews interacting with Klemperer.....	129
Figure 27: Active beneficial behaviours noted by Klemperer, according to level of relationship ...	131
Figure 28: Comparison of beneficial and detrimental behaviours in Klemperer .....	132
Figure 29: Comparison of experiences in 'familiar' relationships (Klemperer).....	135
Figure 30: Positive and negative encounters over time with trendlines (Klemperer).....	137

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## **Abstract**

Of all fields of historical enquiry, Germany's Third Reich is perhaps the richest in sources and historiography. Therefore, it is logical to assume that this is where we see history done at its best. The chief interest of this dissertation is how historians select their sources and how they use the evidence they find in their sources. I have taken relations between Jewish Germans and non-Jewish Germans as a case study because of the enormous quantity of primary source material and because so many historians have commented on the issue. I do not attempt to make any claims about what happened between Jewish Germans and their non-Jewish compatriots nor do I make a moral assessment of behaviours and attitudes among the 'ordinary' people of Germany under the Third Reich. Rather, this is a technical exercise to examine how well the historians have done history in this particular area.

My systematic review of the historians' methodologies reveals that many either distort the evidence they cite or put forward arguments that go well beyond what the evidence warrants, perhaps because of pre-conceived theories which shape their approaches to the evidence. Moreover, they fail to make the best possible use of some types of source such as personal narratives. In order to ascertain whether these sources can be better used, I systematically analyse a selection of personal narratives which are sometimes quoted by historians, in particular the 1933-1945 diaries of Victor Klemperer. My question is: Do these testimonies really say what the historians claim they say about relations between Jewish and non-Jewish Germans? And if not, how can we analyse them to determine what they actually do say?

The two kinds of problems which emerge are how to select a balanced range of sources and how to use them properly. My argument is that there are six methodological principles that should underpin good historical practice. Because historians are not scrupulous to apply these common-sense rules, their arguments are methodologically flawed and they do not use some sources to the full extent of their value. This raises the question of whether these problems are confined to this particular field or whether they are endemic to the history profession as a whole.

## Introduction

The chief interest of this dissertation is how historians use the evidence they find in their sources. I question whether their use of the evidence is methodologically sound and if they have been careful to adhere to rigorous standards of good historical practice as they argue their conclusions. The case study I have chosen is relations between Jewish Germans and non-Jewish Germans in the Third Reich. This particular case study is suitable because of the enormous range of sources available to historians and because so many have commented on the issue, meaning there are plenty of examples available to consider. I have no intention of making any of my own claims about what happened between Jewish Germans and non-Jewish Germans or of making a moral assessment of behaviours and attitudes towards the Jewish people. This is a technical exercise to examine how well the historians have done history in this particular area. Because my focus is on the methodologies that historians employ, I question whether the historians have made adequate source selections and used the evidence they find in the sources appropriately. This includes an examination of how they use personal narratives, which they often find less useful than official regime sources. By means of a systematic approach to personal narratives, I try to ascertain if this kind of source is capable of revealing useful information to inform historians' conclusions. In the case of historians who do use personal narratives, I question whether their conclusions are based on justifiable use of the evidence.

In the first chapter of the dissertation, I examine the views of a number of prominent historians regarding the relationship between Jewish and non-Jewish Germans. I make no attempt to evaluate the degree to which the views of these historians are correct, or to prove or disprove their claims. Instead, I weigh their conclusions against the evidence they utilise to support their arguments. I am primarily concerned with two questions. Are the principles underlying their selection of evidence valid? Does the evidence they offer really support the claims they make on the basis of this evidence? I also explore some types of source that historians commonly do not utilise to see if they do have potential to be valuable.

The second section investigates personal narratives. In general, historians use these sources in a limited way or even occasionally misuse the evidence in them. After examining firstly

what historians say about these types of sources and secondly how they use them, the chapter suggests how personal narratives could be better utilised. To test the assertions made by the historians about relations between Jewish and non-Jewish Germans, I carry out a preliminary exercise in systematic analysis of some narrative testimony to see if the information revealed in the sources reflects their claims.

In the final section of the dissertation, I examine how some historians have utilised the much-discussed diaries of Victor Klemperer. These diaries are an extraordinary resource because of his ability comprehensively to record detailed information about his own life and those of people around him during a period when Jewish people were coming under increasing pressure from the Nazi regime. My key question is: Does Klemperer really say what these historians claim he says? To ascertain if Klemperer's record does match the claims of the historians, I expand on the systematic analysis methods used in Chapter Two. My aim is to see if his testimony has potential to shed any light on the question of relations between Jewish Germans and non-Jewish Germans. I also compare the results of my analysis with the arguments of the historians I have scrutinized. When their claims are evaluated, it emerges that their arguments are misleading and their conclusions go well beyond what is warranted by the evidence that they cite. This raises the question of whether these types of problems are confined to the historiography of the Third Reich or whether they are endemic to the historical profession as a whole.

This dissertation is confined by some parameters which are important to establish before the above issues can be examined. Although historians variously use terms such as 'Germans', 'Aryans', 'non-Jews', or 'ordinary people', few of them define exactly who they mean when they refer to these groups.<sup>1</sup> However, from the implications of their texts, the elements which comprise those groups basically appear to be the same. I have taken 'ordinary' Germans to be those who did not belong to the power structures of the regime. They are the 'masses' referred to by writers such as Hannah Arendt. They held no positions of authority and did not become official representatives of the regime by joining the SA, the SS, or other elite Nazi organisations. For the most part, Jewish Germans had equal status with non-Jewish Germans until Nazi legislation removed the rights of the

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<sup>1</sup> To better reflect the general tenor of a particular historian's argument or a narrator's personal testimony, I have, in most instances, appropriated their terminology. This is why terms such as 'Germans' or 'Aryans' are occasionally inserted in the text.

Jewish people. Some of these ‘ordinary’ non-Jewish Germans were party members and some swore oaths of allegiance to Hitler. However, some Jewish Germans did the same as they felt themselves to come under pressure. Even the Jewish Professor Victor Klemperer swore the oath of allegiance as he sought a way to continue to maintain his quality of life.<sup>2</sup> Analysis of personal narratives demonstrates that some non-Jewish Germans who made significant gestures of support towards Jews like Klemperer were actually Nazi Party members. For this reason it is important to note that questions about support for Hitler and attitudes towards the Jewish population are not necessarily analogous. There is still much to be learned about the responses of the ‘ordinary’ Germans to all aspects of their lives under Hitler.

When people tell their personal stories, we must remember that they can only convey their perceptions of their actual experiences. We cannot with any degree of certainty make claims about what actually happened or about how people behaved. Christopher Browning warns that human behaviour is a very complex phenomenon and that any historian who attempts to explain it is ‘indulging in a certain arrogance’.<sup>3</sup> However, as I shall note throughout the dissertation, a number of historians do make bold and sweeping assertions which rest either on a faulty interpretation of the evidence or on the manipulation of evidence to fit pre-conceived theories.

The terms personal narratives and personal testimonies are used interchangeably through the dissertation. I take these to mean any kind of recording of an individual’s eyewitness account of his or her experiences of life under the Third Reich. These stories are recorded in many different forms such as diaries, memoirs, oral histories, interviews, or surveys. There are other types of testimony possible, such as poetry, fictionalised accounts or other creative forms of expression but I have confined my discussion to the types of testimony to which historians generally refer when they discuss behaviours and attitudes toward Jewish people.

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<sup>2</sup> 20 November 1934. Victor Klemperer, *I Shall Bear Witness: The Diaries of Victor Klemperer 1933-41* (London, 1998), p. 94. See also 16 May 1936, p. 158, as he reflects on this behaviour in himself and ‘Aryan fellow creatures’.

<sup>3</sup> Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York, 1998), p. 188.

Even though my focus in the dissertation is to examine what historians have to say about attitudes toward the Germans who were also Jewish, it is important never to forget that they were not the only victims of the regime. Many other groups suffered varying degrees of persecution under the Nazis: Communists or other political groups, disabled and institutionalized people, Roma or Sinti communities, homosexuals, Catholics or members of religious minorities such as Jehovah's Witnesses, black Germans, and others who were targeted as 'asocial' by the Nazis. The list of outcasts was very long. Unfortunately, the quantity of information available from some of these groups can be small. Some are almost invisible in the historiography.<sup>4</sup> To my knowledge, no-one has attempted a systematic and detailed analysis of the attitudes of the 'ordinary' German people to outcasts belonging to groups other than the Jewish population. The historiography of the Third Reich pays most attention to the plight of the Jewish people, and it is from this group that the richest body of eyewitness testimony has come to us. Most, but not all, of the testimony referenced in this dissertation is from them.

Throughout the dissertation I advocate six methodological principles which I have tried to follow in my own analysis of personal narratives. I note these principles at relevant points throughout the text but they do not appear in order of importance:

- Historians should always take a critical approach to their sources, recognising and acknowledging their weaknesses and strengths. This includes balancing them with other sources and having a clear conception of what the sources are capable of revealing.
- They must refrain from imposing their pre-existing theories on the evidence. Instead, they must genuinely seek to test their theories against the evidence.
- Historians should draw on the knowledge available from other disciplines that can be useful to inform their interpretations of their evidence.
- Historians need to recognise that the evidence from sources generated by the group under scrutiny is just as valuable as the evidence generated by groups not under scrutiny.
- Sources must be approached with an open mind, recognising that they all have something to tell and should be ruled inadmissible only with very good reason.
- Historians must approach their material as systematically as possible.

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<sup>4</sup> Sybil Milton, 'Holocaust: The Gypsies', in *Century of Genocide: Critical Essays and Eyewitness Accounts*, eds. Samuel Totten, et al (New York, 2004), p. 177.



These principles are not ground-breaking and are based mostly on common-sense. They should be intrinsic to good historical practice, but it appears that at least some well-known historians are not being entirely conscientious in their adherence to these basic rules. My ultimate assessment is that, if these principles are rigorously applied, we can go a long way toward diminishing the perceived problems of personal narratives. It follows that, provided they are used correctly, they can deservedly take their place among the credible sources of evidence that inform historians about the history of the Third Reich.

## Chapter One

### Historians: Their Sources and Use of Evidence

For historians who examine the lives of ‘ordinary’ people under the Third Reich, one particular area of interest is relations between Jewish Germans and non-Jewish Germans. Historians have frequently commented on the question of how ‘ordinary Germans’ responded to the systematic isolation, exclusion and murder of their Jewish neighbours. The purpose of this chapter is to identify the views of key historians and to examine their selection and use of primary sources. The chapter identifies three major failings in the way historians have used evidence. They use unsound methodology when choosing their sources, they frequently over-generalise or misuse evidence to fit pre-conceived theories, and they fail to use other evidence which could make valuable contributions to the questions they are attempting to answer. The result is that their arguments are distorted by flawed methodology as they draw conclusions which step well beyond what the evidence warrants.

For the most part, the trend among historians has been to take a critical view of the behaviour of the ‘ordinary’ German people during the Third Reich period. For example, Peter Hoffman writes: ‘On the whole, at all times from 1933 to 1945 the majority of German voters, indeed of the entire population, supported the government, albeit with varying degrees of willingness.’<sup>1</sup> In regard to behaviour towards those persecuted by the regime, in particular the Jews, Hans Mommsen says: ‘Fellow travellers and opportunists were little concerned about the fate of their Jewish fellow citizens; anti-Semitism resulting from conformity and accommodation was indeed one of the worst phenomena of the time.’<sup>2</sup> David Bankier discusses ‘a silence of tacit consent to the Nazi solution’<sup>3</sup> and Ian Kershaw’s maxim ‘The road to Auschwitz was built by hate, but paved with indifference’ has become one of the most frequently quoted statements about the attitudes of ‘ordinary’ Germans to the anti-Semitic policies of the regime.<sup>4</sup> Kershaw readily admits that the

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Hoffman, *German Resistance to Hitler* (Cambridge, Mass., 1988), p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> Hans Mommsen, ‘What Did the Germans Know about the Genocide of the Jews?’, in *November 1938: From ‘Reichskristallnacht’ to Genocide*, ed. Walter Pehle (New York, 1991), p. 194.

<sup>3</sup> David Bankier, *The Germans and the Final Solution: Public Opinion under Nazism* (Oxford, 1992), p. 77.

<sup>4</sup> Ian Kershaw, *Popular Opinion and Political Dissent in the Third Reich: Bavaria 1933-1945* (Oxford, 1983), p. 277. In the preface to the second edition (2005) Kershaw elaborates on and somewhat qualifies his meaning in writing these words without substantially changing his position (2005 ed., pp. xx-xxviii).

examination of attitudes and behaviours towards Jews in Bavaria that inspired his comment are a very minor aspect of his study.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, numerous historians have both endorsed the general tenor of his epigram and applied it to the entire non-Jewish population of Germany. The general consensus among historians is that ‘ordinary’ Germans were largely indifferent to the plight of their Jewish compatriots.

According to many historians, non-Jewish Germans were not only apathetic about the persecution of Jewish people in general, they also sought to distance themselves from those they actually knew, or even take personal advantage of the persecution that Jews faced. Moreover, the situation became worse as time progressed. For example, what historians have to say about the issue of relationship breakdown can be seen in their discussions of what happened in places of work. Statistics show that Jewish people were more prominent in certain professions, particularly commerce, law, medicine, or academia.<sup>6</sup> The positions taken by Claudia Koonz and Heide Gerstenberger are fairly typical of historians who address this issue. Koonz’s approach is to select individuals, Martin Heidegger, Carl Schmitt and Gerhard Kittel, to show how Germans from the intelligentsia appropriated Nazi doctrines along with the anti-Semitism that defined their behaviours.<sup>7</sup> Their high public profiles meant that their endorsement of Hitler and the Nazi agenda gave intellectual support and credibility to the expulsion of Jews from their professional environments.<sup>8</sup> Her implication is that these individuals are representative of their community. Gerstenberger takes a more generalised approach in discussing the workplace experiences of Jews:

There were social, and in particular professional groups whose members were convinced that Jews endangered or prevented them from becoming economically and socially successful. Since this is well known we usually do not seek further explanation for the fact that individuals belonging to these groups made use of the advantages that were offered to them through the persecution of Jews.<sup>9</sup>

In short, historians generally find that, for reasons of personal advantage, Jewish Germans suffered rejection and abuse at the hands of their colleagues and clients, customers or patients. They substantiate their findings by drawing on examples such as diarist and

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<sup>5</sup> Kershaw, *Popular Opinion*, p. xxi.

<sup>6</sup> Sarah Gordon, *Hitler, Germans, and the “Jewish Question”* (Princeton, 1984), pp. 10-14.

<sup>7</sup> Claudia Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience* (Cambridge, Mass., 2003), pp. 46-68.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p. 48.

<sup>9</sup> Heide Gerstenberger, ‘Acquiescence?’, in *Probing the Depths of German Antisemitism: German Society and the Persecution of the Jews 1933-1941*, ed. David Bankier (New York, 2000), p. 26.

academic Victor Klemperer's frequent invective against his colleagues at the Dresden Technical University.<sup>10</sup> Klemperer's growing determination to have nothing further to do with the colleagues who upset him provides, in the view of many historians, confirmation of how existing relationships disintegrated.

Bankier, Kershaw, Frank Bajohr, Saul Friedländer, and others argue that seeking personal advantage, not just in the workplace, but also in general daily life, was a key motivator for mercenary or opportunistic responses to the victimisation of the Jewish population by the regime. Paradoxically, they claim people either took advantage of Nazi measures against Jews for their personal profit, or they protested against Nazi measures because it was costing them something personally. They say that purges by means of dismissals from universities and the public service, which opened opportunities for others, were not the only examples of where this kind of behaviour was exhibited.<sup>11</sup> Historians frequently assert that the spoils of 'Aryanisation' became available to acquisitive Germans as businesses, homes and possessions came up for grabs when Jews were ousted by legislation or physical removal.<sup>12</sup> In this way numerous 'ordinary' Germans became accomplices to robbery and murder.<sup>13</sup> As he discusses deportations from Bavaria, Kershaw writes: 'Where real interest [in what was happening to the Jews] was awakened on the part of the non-Jewish population it was less a product of human concern or moral principle

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<sup>10</sup> For example: 'If one day the situation were reversed and the fate of the vanquished lay in my hands . . . I would have all the intellectuals strung up, and the professors three feet higher than the rest; they would be left hanging from the lamp posts for as long as was compatible with hygiene.' 16 August 1936. Victor Klemperer, *I Shall Bear Witness: The Diaries of Victor Klemperer 1933-41* (London, 1998), pp. 176-177. Omer Bartov, *Germany's War and the Holocaust: Disputed Histories* (Ithaca, N.Y., 2003), p. 201; Hans Reiss, 'Victor Klemperer (1881-1960): Reflections on His 'Third Reich' Diaries, *German Life and Letters*, 51:1 (1998), p. 80; and Koonz, *Nazi Conscience*, p. 220, are just three who repeat this well-known quote. In this instance Klemperer was particularly angry at colleague Johannes Kühn, with whom he still had a social relationship but found frustrating because of his approval for some aspects of the Nazi programme.

<sup>11</sup> Bankier, *Germans*, p. 69. Also see Marion Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 25-26 and Michael Kater, *Doctors under Hitler* (Chapel Hill, 1989), p.184.

<sup>12</sup> Saul Friedländer, 'The Wehrmacht, German Society, and the Knowledge of the Mass Extermination of the Jews' in *Crimes of War: Guilt and Denial in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Omer Bartov et al (New York, 2002), p. 28. Also see Frank Bajohr, 'Aryanisation' in *Hamburg: The Economic Exclusion of Jews and the Confiscation of their Property in Nazi Germany* (New York, 2002); Avraham Barkai, 'The German Volksgemeinschaft from the Persecution of the Jews to the 'Final Solution'', in *Confronting the Nazi Past: New Debates on Modern German History*, ed. Michael Burleigh (New York, 1996), p. 91, and Michael Wildt, 'Violence Against Jews in Germany, 1933-1939' in *Probing the Depths of German Antisemitism*, ed. David Bankier (New York, 2000), pp. 204-208.

<sup>13</sup> Bajohr, 'Aryanisation', p. 281.

than self-interest and the hope of material advantage.’<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the real motive behind denunciations with anti-Semitic content was pure self-interest.<sup>15</sup>

On the other hand, some historians claim that those Germans who protested against anti-Semitic policies did so, not for ethical reasons or out of solidarity with the Jews, but for reasons that were self-serving.<sup>16</sup> According to Bankier, for example, ‘Aryan’ maids who worked for Jewish families protested against the Nuremberg Laws, not out of sympathy for their employers, but simply because the implementation of the Laws would force them out of their jobs.<sup>17</sup> Bankier also argues that ‘Aryan’ farmers demanded the retention of Jewish stock-traders, not for moral or humanitarian reasons, but because they possessed superior skills and gave the farmers higher prices. In a similar vein, Bankier argues that tourist resorts were unhappy at the prospect of losing the custom of wealthy Jewish visitors.<sup>18</sup> Both Bankier and Richard Evans observe that many Germans were anxious that the anti-Semitic policies of the Nazi regime would provoke a boycott of German goods in other countries.<sup>19</sup> According to a number of historians, including Bankier, Avraham Barkai, Friedlander and Christopher Browning, criticisms of *Reichskristallnacht* were motivated, not by disapproval of what had been done to the Jews per se, but by repugnance at the wanton destruction of property and the breakdown of public order.<sup>20</sup>

A further assertion that is commonly encountered in the secondary sources is that, over time, Jewish people faced more and more public hostility from non-Jewish Germans. According to Marion Kaplan, the situation became so bad that people could be attacked in public simply because they looked Jewish.<sup>21</sup> Susanne Heim asserts that Klemperer’s experiences worsened over time as he ‘more and more frequently met Germans who not

<sup>14</sup> Kershaw, *Popular Opinion*, p. 363.

<sup>15</sup> Christl Wickert, ‘Popular Attitudes to National Socialist Antisemitism: Denunciations for “Insidious Offenses” and “Racial Ignominy” in *Probing the Depths of German Antisemitism*, ed. David Bankier (New York, 2000), p. 295. See also Robert Gellately, *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 136-137.

<sup>16</sup> Bankier, *Germans*, p. 73, and Detlev Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition and Racism in Everyday Life* (London, 1993), p. 58.

<sup>17</sup> Bankier, *Germans*, p. 80.

<sup>18</sup> Bankier, *Germans*, p. 96. Also see Kershaw, *Popular Opinion*, p. 240.

<sup>19</sup> Bankier, *Germans*, p. 74, and Richard Evans, *The Third Reich in Power: How the Nazis Won over the Hearts and Minds of a Nation* (London, 2005), pp. 542, 548.

<sup>20</sup> See Barkai, ‘The German *Volksgemeinschaft*’, p. 94. Also see Bankier, *Germans*, pp. 74, 75; Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews, Volume 1: The Years of Persecution 1933-1939* (New York, 1997), p. 295; and Christopher Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution* (Lincoln, 2004), p. 428.

<sup>21</sup> Marion Kaplan, ‘Keeping Calm and Weathering the Storm: Jewish Women’s Responses to Daily Life in Nazi Germany, 1933-1939’ in *Women in the Holocaust*, eds. Dalia Ofer and Lenore J. Weitzman (New Haven, 1998), p. 40.

only supported the policies toward the Jews, but felt a need to express their hatred of the Jews personally by openly attacking them.’<sup>22</sup> In the view of Ulrich Herbert, ‘escalating indifference’ was the typical attitude towards Jews.<sup>23</sup> Barkai attributes this phenomenon to years of fanatical indoctrination which isolated Jewish people and converted them, in the eyes of non-Jewish Germans, into a depersonalised mythical enemy stereotype.<sup>24</sup> Other factors contributing to changing mindsets over time included letters home from the Front expressing animosity towards Jews and gradual internalization of government policies.<sup>25</sup> Browning believes the process of legalising discrimination against Jews led eventually to a widespread view among non-Jewish Germans that the time had arrived to end the role of Jewish people in German society.<sup>26</sup> Otto Dov Kulka asserts that as the regime progressed, the most notable feature of public reaction to the plight of the Jews was increasing silence.<sup>27</sup> His opinion is shared by many other historians.

Kershaw claims that there is little more that can be said on the issue. As far as he is concerned, the nature of the available evidence places limits on how much historians can say about the attitudes of the population to the Nazi regime in general and to its anti-Semitic policies in particular:

We have to face the fact that there is no possibility of quantifying opinion on the basis of the surviving evidence. After 1933, when the curtain falls on free and open expression of opinion, the development of popular attitudes towards Nazism can only be reconstructed impressionistically.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Susanne Heim, ‘The German-Jewish Relationship in the Diaries of Victor Klemperer’ in *Probing the Depths of German Antisemitism*, ed. D. Bankier (New York, 2000), p. 324.

<sup>23</sup> Ulrich Herbert, ‘Extermination Policy: New Answers and Questions about the History of the “Holocaust” in German Historiography’, in *National Socialist Extermination Policies: Contemporary German Perspectives and Controversies*, ed. U. Herbert (New York, 2000), p. 43.

<sup>24</sup> Barkai, ‘The German Volksgemeinschaft’, pp. 95-96.

<sup>25</sup> Michael Burleigh, ‘Introduction’, *Confronting the Nazi Past*, p. 20, and Otto Dov Kulka, ‘The German Population and the Jews: State of Research and New Perspectives’ in *Probing the Depths of German Antisemitism*, ed. D. Bankier (New York, 2000), pp. 277, 280. See also Bankier, *Germans*, pp. 108-109 and Friedländer, ‘Knowledge Mass Extermination’, pp. 21, 24. For an extended discussion of soldiers, their attitudes and the news they conveyed home, see Omer Bartov, ‘The Distortion of Reality’ in *Hitler’s Army: Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich* (New York, 1991), pp. 106-178.

<sup>26</sup> Browning, *Origins*, p. 10.

<sup>27</sup> Kulka, ‘German Population’, pp. 275, 277.

<sup>28</sup> Kershaw, *Popular Opinion*, p. 6. This statement contains echoes of Eva Reichmann’s assertion that no single spoken or written word written after the Nazis came to power could give any direct indication of the feeling of the masses: Eva Reichmann, *Hostages of Civilisation* (Westport, 1949), p. 190. Reichmann’s belief is contradicted by the argument in my next chapter.

The difficulty with Kershaw's standpoint arises from the fact, which he admits, that no one has yet made a concerted effort to examine the evidence systematically.<sup>29</sup> He has more to say in the introduction to *Hitler, the Germans, and the Final Solution*:

I have the feeling, as I already did by the mid-eighties, that interpretations of the German population's stance on the 'Final Solution' cannot be taken any further. Sometimes historians simply have to accept that they cannot find the hard and fast answers they seek in the inadequate remnants of the past with which they have to deal. New work will, I fear, be susceptible to the likelihood of diminishing returns.<sup>30</sup>

This claim is not tenable until a reasonable attempt has been made to test the available evidence methodically and analytically. As I shall discuss throughout this dissertation, none of the above-mentioned historians have put *all* available sources through a rigorous and methodologically sound process of systematic investigation. Nonetheless, the prevailing viewpoint of the secondary sources stands mostly unchallenged. The assertions that historians make about indifference and opportunistic behaviours among non-Jewish Germans are widely accepted in the secondary literature. These assertions also serve to subtly advance the case made by historians, which claims that the German people were complicit with the regime in its actions against Jewish Germans.<sup>31</sup>

## The Problem of Source Selection

To begin the process of tracing how historians arrive at their conclusions, we must first look at the decisions they make when they choose their sources. Historians face strategic problems when they select their sources because different sources will yield different information which can influence or even distort their conclusions. When studying modern history, especially the history of the Third Reich, the sheer volume of available resources means that no single historian can explore adequately the full range of archived sources,

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<sup>29</sup> Kershaw, *Popular Opinion*, p. 224. Although this comment was made over two decades ago, it appears it has yet to be contradicted by subsequent studies.

<sup>30</sup> Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, the Germans, and the Final Solution* (New Haven, 2008), p. 11. Hilberg expresses the same sort of idea when he rules out the possibility of any sharply new perspective being obtainable, even if we generate more testimony from oral history projects. Raul Hilberg, 'I Was Not There', in *Writing and the Holocaust*, ed. Berel Lang (New York, 1988), p. 20.

<sup>31</sup> Tony Kushner believes that Holocaust scholarship tends to divide Germans into neat categories of perpetrator-victim-bystander. See Tony Kushner, '“Pissing in the Wind”? The Search for Nuance in the Study of Holocaust “Bystanders”' in *Bystanders to the Holocaust: A Re-evaluation*, ed. David Cesarini (London, 2002), pp. 60, 64. Bystanders are subsequently bracketed with perpetrators to make them complicit in regime crimes. Hence this perpetuates the notion of Germany as a 'society of perpetrators'. See Gudrun Schwartz, "During Total War, We Girls Want to Be Where We Can Really Accomplish Something", in *Crimes of War: Guilt and Denial in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Omer Bartov et al (New York, 2002), p. 122.

personal testimonies, or the many other sources available. In this section I shall comment on the source decisions made by eleven historians who have to some degree discussed the question of how the Jewish population was treated by ‘ordinary’ non-Jewish Germans.<sup>32</sup> The problem which emerges is that their source decisions are methodologically unsound. This is because they rely too much on any one kind of source and do not follow closely a basic principle which should be adhered to when considering which sources to use.

The first methodological principle advocated in this dissertation states that historians must always take a critical approach to their sources. This includes ensuring their sources are balanced with others and that the historians have a clear understanding of what the sources are capable of revealing. Historians must firstly recognise, and secondly acknowledge, the weaknesses and strengths of their sources. A transparently balanced assessment of sources is essential to ensure the value of each type of source is not overlooked, even as their limiting factors are taken into account.

### Regime reports

The sources most often favoured by historians are those generated from a ‘top down’ view, not from a ‘bottom up’ view. The information in them is based on the impressions of regime representatives who observed and reported what they believed to be the responses of the people. These official sources are the reports compiled by district governors (such as *Gauleiter* or *Kreisleiter*), the Nazi Party, the Gestapo, and SD intelligence (SS security service).<sup>33</sup> A proportionately smaller number of historians draw on personal narratives

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<sup>32</sup> David Bankier, *Germans and the Final Solution: Public Opinion under Nazism* (Oxford, 1992); Omer Bartov, ‘Jews as Germans: Victor Klemperer Bears Witness’, *Germany’s War and the Holocaust: Disputed Histories* (Ithaca, N.Y., 2003), pp. 192-215; Michael Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History* (London, 2000); Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews, Volume 1: The Years of Persecution 1933-1939* (New York, 1997), and *The Years of Extermination: Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1939-1945* (New York, 2007); Robert Gellately, *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany* (Oxford, 2001); Susanne Heim, ‘The German-Jewish Relationship in the Diaries of Victor Klemperer’ in *Probing the Depths of German Antisemitism*, ed. D. Bankier (New York, 2000), pp. 312-325; Eric Johnson, *Nazi Terror: The Gestapo, Jews, and Ordinary Germans* (New York, 2000); Marion Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (Oxford, 1998); Ian Kershaw, *Popular Opinion and Political Dissent in the Third Reich: Bavaria 1933-1945* (Oxford, 1983); Otto Dov Kulka, ‘The German Population and the Jews: State of Research and New Perspectives’ in *Probing the Depths of German Antisemitism*, ed. D. Bankier (New York, 2000), pp. 271-281; and Michael Wildt, ‘Violence Against Jews in Germany, 1933-1939’ in *Probing the Depths of German Antisemitism*, ed. David Bankier (New York, 2000), pp. 181-209.

<sup>33</sup> Historians also rely heavily on Sopade reports which were compiled by the exiled German Socialist Party. See Peukert, p. 49. They regard Sopade reports as complementary and relatively reliable sources because they generally corroborate Nazi documents, even though they too were compiled from a specific ideological and political perspective. However, they are potentially contaminated because they were based partially on information leaked from government sources. Furthermore, after 1938 they were undermined by the dwindling number of informants. See Gordon, p. 167.



such as diaries, memoirs or oral histories. Their use of these source types will be explored later in this dissertation. For now we shall examine the regime reports which are preferred by many to determine if their selections are justifiably appropriate for engaging with the issue of attitudes toward Jewish people. The first area to question is how they deal with the shortcomings of their sources.

In general, historians seldom alert their readers to any problems arising from their use of their sources. Of the eleven examined here (Bankier, Bartov, Burleigh, Friedländer, Gellately, Heim, Johnson, Kaplan, Kershaw, Kulka, and Wildt), seven do not acknowledge any issues related to their selection of sources, two make only passing mention of some problems, and the remaining two, while they do draw attention to some of the issues, do so in the context of justifying their choice of sources.<sup>34</sup> The seven who fail to tell us of any potential difficulties with the sources make only brief comments to justify their use. For example, Michael Wildt refers to his sources – regional archives and a memoir – only in footnotes. There he indicates his belief that they are representative of other regions, without saying how.<sup>35</sup> Robert Gellately's most commonly referenced sources are other historians, official Reich sources or newspapers. But he does not justify his choices other than to briefly defend his use of newspapers in the face of questions about censorship.<sup>36</sup> The remainder of these seven give no indication in their texts of any limitations or problems arising from their favoured sources.<sup>37</sup> Their readers are clearly expected to accept each historian's analysis without opportunity to weigh up whether the sources are reliable or comprehensive enough to support their arguments. The two who mention some issues in passing are Eric Johnson and Otto Dov Kulka.<sup>38</sup> Johnson's sources are his own interview data, archived court records, and biographical records of regime officials. His few comments on source deficiencies relate to the court records. Kulka confines his comments to the 'sporadic and subjective character' of personal narratives, effectively dismissing them as useful, while he endorses the uses of archived regime reports because he believes

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<sup>34</sup> Note that Hilberg admits that it took him fifty years of research before he gave thought to analyzing his sources. Raul Hilberg, *Sources of Holocaust Research: An Analysis* (Chicago, 2001), p. 7.

<sup>35</sup> See Wildt, 'Violence', p. 183, footnote 8, which lists the regional archives he uses. His sole memoir source (Moritz Mayer) is also referenced in Wildt, p.190, footnote 24. Because Mayer's perspective is 'diametrically opposed' to that of the regime's documents, Wildt's implication is that his sources are hence appropriately balanced.

<sup>36</sup> Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, p. 6.

<sup>37</sup> Kaplan provides the merest of hints that she has thought about source choices but limits her discussion of issues with memoirs to comments on gender differences and the self-selected content of memoirs. Kaplan, *Dignity and Despair*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>38</sup> Johnson, *Nazi Terror*, pp. 23-27, and Kulka, 'German Population', pp. 271-272, 278-279.

they are 'paramount' sources. Presumably, he means that as sources, regime reports are superior to any other. He has not been even-handed in his treatment of sources because he disregards the weaknesses of his favoured sources but instead notes the weaknesses of the sources he does not use.

Kershaw and Bankier are the only two of the eleven who take the trouble to discuss the shortcomings of their sources in any depth.<sup>39</sup> They fail to indicate, however, how they compensate for any problems with balanced or effective use of alternate sources.

Kershaw's remarks qualify the trustworthiness of his sources, which are mostly the reports compiled by various Nazi agencies.<sup>40</sup> He warns that they have 'a strong internal bias, are subjective appraisals of the situation, and allow no possibility of quantification.'<sup>41</sup> But he remains satisfied that the broad line of mood and opinion still comes through clearly, even if the best we can hope for is merely an impressionistic picture.<sup>42</sup> Despite the methodological problems involved in using them, Kershaw clearly regards his regime agency reports as superior to all other kinds of primary sources. Bankier acknowledges that his sources, which are Nazi agency reports with the same origins as Kershaw's, reflect the moods and attitudes of people under state coercion. He notes that this necessarily compromises the conventional notion of public opinion. While he declares that there is no way of ascertaining how representative his source information is, he still believes that informant use of terms such as 'widespread', 'representative', or 'typical' do imply a degree of quantification on which certain valid generalisations can be based.<sup>43</sup> Even as he comments on the doubtful accuracy of one document, he undermines the value of other sources: 'It is therefore important to use other sources when available, as a control or to correct distortions. Regrettably, however, additional material does not always put us on more solid ground.'<sup>44</sup> Both of these historians appear to be content with their choice of principal sources, while deeming other sources to be of lesser value.

Although Bankier and Kershaw are careful to acknowledge some problems with their sources, they fail to explore sufficiently other important factors that might affect the

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<sup>39</sup> Bankier, *Germans*, pp. 5-10 and Kershaw, *Popular Opinion*, pp. 5-10.

<sup>40</sup> Kershaw also discusses Sopade reports but makes no evaluative comments about them, providing instead just a general description of their origins and content.

<sup>41</sup> Kershaw, *Popular Opinion*, p. 6.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>43</sup> Bankier, *Germans*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 117-118.

authority of their chosen sources. While the reports are indeed highly relevant to the subject matter, because their most significant aims included ascertaining public ‘mood’, they still require a very cautious approach. Whilst the use of such sources is entirely valid, the perspective of these sources is limited. This can and does distort the arguments of those historians who rely too much on this type of evidence.

The first factor which affects the perspective of the reports is that those who compiled official reports operated from a strong ideological base. Their actions were motivated by and reflected their Nazi ideals and ambitions. Certainly, the reports of Nazi party officials such as *Gauleiter*, along with Gestapo and SD intelligence reports, are compromised by a high level of bias. For a while, large quantities of information from local offices such as councils or police stations were pieced together into reports. These tended to have a low level of bias but they were stopped in 1936 because they contained evidence of negative public mood which risked damaging the image of national unity sought by the regime.<sup>45</sup> Termination of reports for these reasons should alert us to the presence of agendas in the official agencies. In addition to the problems of ideological agendas, we have to bear in mind two elements that influence the official records of any regime: firstly, records are created, not for posterity, but for the administrative and legal purposes of the institutions that produce them and secondly, they are imbalanced because they reflect the activities of the powerful and organised elements in society, which means they cannot be a fully representational image of the human past.<sup>46</sup> There are many aspects of human society and behaviour that official records cannot capture, particularly amongst the ‘ordinary’ people. In short, we must always bear in mind that the perspectives of the Nazi reports are limited by the ideology behind them and purpose-specific activities involved in their compilation.

A second factor is that secondary texts do not tell us about *how* the reports, in particular *Lageberichte* and *Stimmungsberichte* (situation- and mood-reports), were compiled. Because they do not make clear the flow of information, the sequences involved in constructing a report, or the factors that compromised information, we cannot understand at what stages information might have been contaminated, altered or otherwise affected by

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<sup>45</sup> Bankier, *Germans*, pp. 5-6. These reports only existed for about twenty months between the years 1934-1936.

<sup>46</sup> Wolfgang Weber, “Mass of Trash” or “Veins of Gold”? : *An Investigative Report on the Relationship Between Oral History and Archives* (Regensburg, 2000), pp. 42-45, esp. p. 42, quoting H. Jenkinson, *A Manual of Archive Administration* (London, 1937); and pp. 35-36, quoting D. Reimer, ‘Oral History and Archives. The Case in Favor’, *Canadian Oral History Association Journal*, 1 (1981-82), pp. 30-33.

handling. Lawrence Stokes describes one example of how an informant obtained information from a specific context – a church service.<sup>47</sup> But after information was passed on by informants, it travelled through numerous levels of authority. The raw material was processed any number of times, with varying final destinations and recipients. Enhancement or trivialisation of significant details was inevitable and handling in several offices meant layer after layer of potential for distortion. Lee Benson writes that historians should not be expected always to reconstruct every step in sequences of communication flows but adds that ‘it seems axiomatic that historians ought to *try* to reconstruct such sequences if they hope to reconstruct official perceptions with any reasonable degree of precision and credibility, or hope to understand and explain how those perceptions came about.’<sup>48</sup> In the end, historians who work with these documents need to be open about the fact they have been processed an unknown number of times. The original information has been subjected to intervention which limits its ability to yield credible data.

The third factor affecting the perspective of regime sources is that they originated with agents whose task was likely to have been influenced, not only by their own agendas, but by various other pressures. This probability is pushed aside by some historians who focus on the information in the reports, believing that they express ‘authentic’ opinion because they reported dissenting views that reflected negatively on the regime.<sup>49</sup> Whether the historians are correct or not, they must still take into account how reporting was affected by the situations of the informants. There are several factors which would have influenced the collection of information. Informants were not specially trained to do the work, they had no concept of the techniques that form the basis of contemporary public opinion surveying, and their activities were supported what Stokes describes as ‘weak pillars’ of anonymity and chance.<sup>50</sup> Conscious knowledge that they would face harassment or ostracism if discovered may have influenced their activities.<sup>51</sup> We do not know how much they downplayed, or what they exaggerated. We have no way of ascertaining whether the information they reported was representative or typical. Added to this, their task was no

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<sup>47</sup> Lawrence Stokes, ‘Otto Ohlendorf, the Sicherheitsdienst and Public Opinion in Nazi Germany’, in *Police Forces in History*, ed. George Mosse (London, 1975), pp. 243-249.

<sup>48</sup> Lee Benson, ‘An Approach to the Scientific Study of Past Public Opinion’, *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 31:4 (1967-1968), pp. 546-547. (Italics Benson’s).

<sup>49</sup> For example, see Kershaw, *Final Solution*, p. 9, or Peukert, pp. 50, 52.

<sup>50</sup> Stokes, ‘Otto Ohlendorf’, pp. 259-260. By this, Stokes means that the informants were dependent on remaining anonymous and chancing across information useful to report. Neither element provided a good foundation for effective gathering of information.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 252.

doubt influenced by their ideological predispositions, the slanted focus of targeted informational searches, and the almost certain pressure to please, appease or toady to superiors. The question that we must ask is whether those on the lower rungs of this regime with totalitarian aspirations were totally convinced of their safety if they presented completely objective information to their managers. If an agent forwarded data about opposition to Nazi doctrines in his area, how much did that place him at risk if he also carried responsibility for successfully disseminating ideology? Would he be tempted to use reports to prove his own efficiency? Would his instinctive desire for upward mobility or praise from superiors lead him to produce material more sympathetic to their own desires? We cannot possibly answer these questions definitively, but to avoid the danger of glibly taking the sources at face value, they must at least be asked.<sup>52</sup> Even the SD questioned the reliability of many of its agents. Informants were classified into five categories. In three of these (*Zubringer*, *Helfer*, or *Unzuverlässige*) the agents were either paid, had other personal motives or were known to be unreliable.<sup>53</sup> Eventually, tensions between the optimism demanded by Himmler and Germany's increasingly critical situation led to changes in the tone of the SD reports, but, even before this, it is likely that agents must have been aware that too much bad news would be unwelcome.<sup>54</sup> Not only Himmler, but also Goebbels, Bormann, some *Gauleiter* and even local party branches complained about or otherwise interfered with the reporting process.<sup>55</sup> With such a multiplicity of pressures, the circumstances under which the agents set about their task were likely to have had significant impact on the overall result.

The fourth factor is that regime reports could not gauge mood accurately because their informants could not access the real views of the people. Information from eyewitness testimonies tells us that people were aware there were spies around and that they were cautious in their communications. One survey respondent told interviewers: "In the course

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<sup>52</sup> To be fair, Bankier does make passing mention of obvious bias in the sources: Bankier, *Germans*, pp. 6-7. Kershaw also draws attention to the same issue: Kershaw, *Popular Opinion*, pp. 5-8. Of course the dilemmas of Nazi agents in subordination to the hierarchy do not apply to Sopade agents but their ideological orientation, focus on the working class, dwindling access to information and tendency to draw on leaked government sources remains important to take into account when assessing validity and reliability.

<sup>53</sup> Bankier, *Germans*, p. 7. *Zubringer*: paid informers on contract, *Helfer*: informers with personal motives, *Unzuverlässige*: unreliable collaborators, ex-convicts.

<sup>54</sup> Bankier, *Germans*, p. 8.

<sup>55</sup> Stokes, 'Otto Ohlendorf', pp. 238, 245, 248-249, 251-254.

of time, all people became cautious. They simply didn't speak with people anymore.”<sup>56</sup>

Personal testimonies tell of a kind of double existence, for example:

One day [a neighbour who was the local postmaster] calls me into his office and he says, “Look, I'm very embarrassed to say this. I value you as neighbours. But please tell your mother not to take it amiss if I don't say hello to her. After all, I'm an official here and I could lose my job. So please don't take it as if we have anything against you.”<sup>57</sup>

Frequent signs of sympathy were made in secret, while in public they were kept hidden, even denied. Even our supposed friends feared one another and pretended to have an anti-Jewish attitude.<sup>58</sup>

Informants attempting to access the opinions of these people relied on overheard or provoked conversations in everyday environments.<sup>59</sup> There are plenty of indicators in eyewitness accounts that this first step in the process of communicating information to the regime hierarchy frequently may have been thwarted or at least contaminated in some way:

The few [Nazi] hundred-percenters are known; they are toadied to - and shunned. People warn you of them, stop talking or change the subject whenever they come into the room. And no one dares tell them to their faces what he thinks, what is bothering him, and what he trembles at.<sup>60</sup>

Everyone, literally everyone cringes with fear. No letter, no telephone conversation, no word on the street is safe anymore. Everyone fears the next person may be an informer.<sup>61</sup>

No one dared speak loudly, no one dared utter a harmless comment to his neighbour.<sup>62</sup>

The old major said to me: Within these four walls you can speak your mind (*sic*).<sup>63</sup>

From my immediate surroundings I can only think of one single woman who was devoted to the party. She lived on our street and collected things for the NS-People's Welfare, and she wanted us to subscribe to the *Völkischer Beobachter*, which we did not have. She was suspicious, we were too.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Interview 958 Berlin (unnamed) in Eric Johnson and Karl-Heinz Reuband, *What We Knew: Terror, Mass Murder and Everyday Life in Nazi Germany* (London, 2005), p. 359.

<sup>57</sup> Karl Meyer in Johnson, *What We Knew*, p. 22.

<sup>58</sup> Joseph Levy in Margarete Limberg and Hubert Rübsaat (eds.), *Germans No More: Accounts of Jewish Everyday Life 1933-1938* (New York, 2006), p. 82.

<sup>59</sup> Stokes, ‘Otto Ohlendorf’, pp. 259-260. Public opinion research guidelines of the era advised: ‘The best way in which the tendencies at work in any community can be discovered and estimated is by moving freely about among all sorts and conditions of men and noting how they are affected by the news or the arguments brought from day to day to their knowledge.’ James Bryce, *Modern Democracies*, Vol. 1 (New York, 1921), p. 156, quoted by Benson, ‘Past Public Opinion’, p. 560.

<sup>60</sup> 29 Sept 1938. Ruth Andreas-Friedrich, *Berlin Underground: 1938-1945* (New York, 1989), p. 7

<sup>61</sup> 19 August 1933. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 29.

<sup>62</sup> Joseph Levy in Limberg, p. 83.

<sup>63</sup> 28 November 1938. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 265.

<sup>64</sup> Marion Yorck von Wartenburg, *The Power of Solitude: My Life in the German Resistance* (Lincoln, 2000), p. 39.

Social life was cut down enormously – you couldn't trust anyone any more.<sup>65</sup>

It wasn't so much that criticism was dangerous; it was pointless. Still I never felt free to say what I wanted, never felt a sense of personal freedom.<sup>66</sup>

People have transformed themselves . . . they put on masks. No one knows what the individual thinks [or] . . . what he feels.<sup>67</sup>

How significant was the fear that people noted in the personal testimonies above? Recent surveys of 2,648 people conducted by Eric Johnson and Karl-Heinz Reuband indicated that between 76 and 83 percent of people never feared arrest for themselves or their family members.<sup>68</sup> For the most part they managed to live fairly normal lives until the war years.<sup>69</sup> This differs from the opinions in early Third Reich historiography which depicted a society cowering, intimidated and threatened on all sides by the ubiquitous Gestapo.<sup>70</sup> The Johnson survey results also differ from accounts such as those above where people indicated they *did* feel fear. Johnson concludes that most people acquired a feeling of safety by keeping quiet and conforming to the system.<sup>71</sup> On the infrequent occasions they failed to conform, they took few risks, employed much secrecy, and knew there was little danger of detection. Johnson and Reuband explain that interactions with fellow citizens depended on the level of trust; their respondents knew to restrain themselves in front of known Nazi sympathizers. Their final assessment is that people 'retreated into their own private sphere and often turned a deaf ear to political issues.'<sup>72</sup> Therefore, it seems fear

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<sup>65</sup> Maria Armkerl in William Sheridan Allen, *The Nazi Seizure of Power: The Experience of a Single German Town 1930-1935* (Chicago, 1965), p. 179.

<sup>66</sup> Hans Abbenrode in Allen, *Nazi Seizure*, p. 179.

<sup>67</sup> Rudolf Steiner, quoted by Koonz, *Nazi Conscience*, p. 75.

<sup>68</sup> Johnson, *What We Knew*, pp. 354-355, 356-360.

<sup>69</sup> Accounting for this, Johnson and Reuband explain that the passage of time and recall of distant events leads to overestimation of normality and underestimation of fear. However, in agreement with other commentators, they do believe that repeated experiences of fear-inducing situations are likely to be remembered with a degree of accuracy. See for example, Nechama Tec, 'Diaries and Oral History: Some Methodological Considerations', *Religion and the Arts*, 4:1 (2000), pp. 88-89, although Primo Levi warns recalled memories can become over-rehearsed and stereotyped by frequent re-telling, see Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved* (London, 1988), pp. 11-12.

<sup>70</sup> See Klaus-Michael Mallman and Gerhard Paul, 'Omniscient, Omnipotent, Omnipresent?: Gestapo, Society and Resistance' in *Nazism and German Society, 1933-1945*, ed. David Crew (London, 1994), pp.166-196, and Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Ipperman, *The Racial State: Germany 1933-1945* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 7-22, esp. p. 12.

<sup>71</sup> Johnson, *What We Knew*, p. 357.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 360.

and feelings of safety co-existed as people adapted to an environment they knew presented risks if they did not exercise caution.<sup>73</sup>

To sum up, the reports produced by the Nazi regime are deeply problematic sources that must be used with great caution. Though they are valuable sources, and though it is entirely legitimate to make use of them, it is dangerous to privilege them over other sources. Those historians who base their conclusions largely on their interpretation of regime-produced reports have not carefully thought through the methodological issues that surround their use. It seems prudent that historians should be careful to balance their sources, yet few of them do.

## Newspapers

The principle of taking a critical approach to sources means they must be thoroughly checked and evaluated against as many other sources as possible. The two essential elements of this rule are comparison and comprehensiveness of sources. The more limited the range of sources consulted, the greater the chance that the evidence will not be representative or helpful to build a complete (as opposed to one-sided) picture. Gellately's approach to newspapers as sources provides an example of how vital it is to consult a variety of sources. Gellately tells us German citizens paid 'avid attention' to the newspapers, reading more attentively because of the need to figure out what was going on, even with knowledge of censorship in the material.<sup>74</sup> Therefore newspapers, along with archived Gestapo files and other materials generated by the regime, are an important source for him because they help to prove his argument about 'how and why the German people backed the Nazi dictatorship.'<sup>75</sup> Gellately's opinion on the role of the press in the lives of the German people contrasts sharply with Bankier's. Bankier believes that public receptiveness to newspapers declined, with increasingly critical responses and lack of confidence in published information.<sup>76</sup> He finds that Party claims of increased readership were in actual fact the result of coercion, with subscribers hoping to cancel at the first

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<sup>73</sup> For an extreme example of the co-existence of fear and feelings of safety see the stories of the residents of Mauthausen as described by Victoria Barnett, *Bystanders: Conscience and Complicity during the Holocaust* (Westport, Conn., 1999), pp. 5-9.

<sup>74</sup> Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, p. 6.

<sup>75</sup> Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, pp. 8, 339-343. Gellately's partiality for newspapers sources is demonstrated in the footnotes to Chapter Six of *Backing Hitler*; the chapter where he most extensively discusses the responses of the population to the persecution of the Jews. Footnote references to secondary sources are the most frequent (37 percent) with press sources the second most frequent (22 percent). Official regime sources are third (19 percent).

<sup>76</sup> Bankier, *Germans*, p. 21.



opportunity.<sup>77</sup> The way to decide which of these contrasting opinions is more correct and to learn more about the attitudes to newspapers is to compare the evidence found in newspapers with that provided by other sources.

We can use three other types of source to give us a critical perspective on newspapers and their role in German society under the Third Reich: Statistical data on the circulation of newspapers, discussion of newspapers in personal narratives, and the *Inside Germany Reports*, which were based on news from informants in Germany and published in New York by anti-Nazi German refugees.<sup>78</sup> Statistical evidence from Orton Hale's study of the German press shows that readership did change significantly during the Nazi years, with reading patterns varying and subscription rates declining. At the beginning of the regime, pressure tactics and the initial wave of enthusiasm for the new government brought increases in newspaper subscriptions in 1933, but these dropped sharply, with the loss of one million subscribers in 1934.<sup>79</sup> In each of the three years 1933, 1934, 1935, annual circulation declined by one million in sales and circulation annually.<sup>80</sup> Only the outbreak of war brought on a substantial increase in press sales and circulation.<sup>81</sup> The situation in Essen was typical of many German industrial cities. Essen had six daily papers, but when the Marxist publications were suppressed by the government, subscribers switched either to the non-partisan *Generalanzeiger*, which had the largest circulation, or the Catholic paper, or took no paper at all. They did not switch to the Nazi paper.<sup>82</sup>

As freedom of the press was eventually squeezed out of existence, readers became increasingly cynical about and indifferent to newspapers. The author of an article in *Zeitungs-Verlag*, the publishers' journal, stated in April 1934 that he heard people say on every hand: "Oh, I don't read newspapers much any more."<sup>83</sup> Klemperer's diary records the same sort of responses, commenting: 'Recently Heckmann, the gardener, and today Vogel, the grocer, in complete unanimity: "I have no idea what's happening, I don't read a

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<sup>77</sup> Bankier, *Germans*, pp. 25-26.

<sup>78</sup> *Inside Germany Reports* will be discussed more fully later in this chapter.

<sup>79</sup> Orton J. Hale, *The Captive Press in the Third Reich* (Princeton, N.J., 1964), p. 145.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 230.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 236.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>83</sup> Hale, pp. 146-148. No.15, April 15, 1934, *Zeitungs-Verlag* "Die Flucht aus der Zeitung."

newspaper.” People are apathetic and indifferent.’<sup>84</sup> Klemperer further describes his own reaction: ‘People simply regard it all as a theatrical sham, take nothing seriously and will be very surprised when the theatre turns to bloody reality one day.’ *Inside Germany Reports* comment: ‘As one person said, just returned from a long trip through Germany, where he had spoken with countless people craving news from outside: “No one believes what he reads in the papers any more, not even the nazis themselves”’ and ““Since many people don’t read the newspapers, or only read the notices about food rations, the sudden appearance of yellow stars surprised a great part of the population.””<sup>85</sup> Such comments do not, by themselves, prove that all Germans regarded the press with cynical indifference. But they do raise serious questions about the wisdom of relying too much on evidence taken from newspapers. Though newspapers perhaps can give some insight into popular attitudes, the evidence found in them must always be carefully weighed against other sources. When information from personal narratives is combined with the statistics from Hale, it becomes evident that newspapers alone cannot indicate the level of support the people gave to the regime.

It is also important to remain clear about exactly what sources are capable or not capable of telling us. For example, Gellately does not clarify how newspapers contributed to the people’s support of Hitler. He notes that media reports and press stories were an essential rationalizing dimension of the dictatorship and that the media blatantly distorted reports about the events of the November 9 pogrom.<sup>86</sup> But this tells us nothing about the responses of the people. While newspapers from the Third Reich can tell us what sort of information was being disseminated, they do not necessarily indicate how the information was received or how reflective the press was of the behaviour or attitudes of the people, particularly in a system which made such a concerted effort to impose its own attitudes and behaviours.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> 25 May 1938. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 248. Klemperer earlier comments how boring the people find the radio and how they make fun of it due to Goebbels’ monopoly, 14 July 1934, p.72: ‘The progression of feelings [about propaganda on the radio] runs from a deadened indifference to aversion and revolt.’

<sup>85</sup> *Inside Germany Reports*, No. 2 (15 May 1939), p. 2, No. 21 (Feb. 1942), p. 15.

<sup>86</sup> Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, pp. 6-7, 127.

<sup>87</sup> There seems to be a dearth of research available to address the question of the effect the press has on its readers, which, if it was available, would be a great value to the study of Nazi Germany. Larry Bartels writes: ‘The state of research on media effects is one of the most notable embarrassments of modern social science.’ Larry Bartels, ‘Messages Received: The Political Impact of Media Exposure’, *The American Political Science Review*, 87:2 (1993), p. 267. In my search for studies examining the effects of media on attitudes I found that they usually focus on present-day technologies within democracies. For example one prominent text is Denis McQuail, *McQuail’s Mass Communication Theory*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (London, 2005). Although an entire section of the book is devoted to media effects (pp. 456-534), McQuail acknowledges that theory and argument take precedence over effective measurement. His (theoretical) conclusion on social-cultural effects

Reviewing the approach that some prominent historians take to their sources has revealed that there are issues, not only with their choice of sources but with their handling of them. This indicates they are not being entirely conscientious or attentive to their decisions about their primary source material. Looking beyond the problems of source selection, we now need to examine how historians use the evidence they find in their sources.

## The Problem with Use of Evidence

The second methodological principle which historians should follow insists that they must refrain from imposing their pre-existing theories on the evidence. Instead, they must genuinely seek to test their theories against the evidence. Analysis of the arguments of some historians demonstrates that they over-generalise from or distort the evidence to fit their pre-conceived ideas. If pre-conceptions do get in the way of a historian's enquiry, valuable information is under-utilised and the historian will read things into the text that are simply not there or discard useful information that is there. It does not follow that poor methodology necessarily leads to faulty conclusions. If the methodology is flawed, however, the conclusions become questionable. The examples given below demonstrate that there are a variety of ways in which historians can misuse evidence.

The first example of over-generalizing from the available evidence is provided by Michael Wildt in his study of violence against Jews up to 1939. Wildt extrapolates from a small number of illustrations to draw far-reaching conclusions. He addresses the question of participation in persecution by focussing in particular on the town of Treuchtlingen in middle Franconia.<sup>88</sup> Wildt makes reasonable decisions about his source material. He accesses all available records that concern events in the town he studies, combining official records from the Municipal Archives and balancing them with the personal testimony of one of the town's inhabitants. Although the selection is limited, it is not problematic. But issues arise with how he reaches the conclusion that German citizens participated *en masse* in violence against Jews.

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is that while media do have effects and probably do account for some general trends, they are often inconsistent, cancel each other out, and are unlikely to be the main driving forces of fundamental long-term change (pp. 501, 516).

<sup>88</sup> Wildt, 'Violence', pp. 181-209.

Treuchtlingen's 119 Jews were subjected to years of increasing harassment, culminating in a pogrom on *Reichskristallnacht* after which all the remaining Jews were finally driven out or deported. The stories of what happened to the town's Jews are horrifying and there is no question that they were subjected to extremes of persecution which many did not survive. Wildt's purpose is to focus on the treatment of the Jews not only at the hands of the SA and Hitler Youth but just as importantly on bystanders and observers who increasingly became participants and perpetrators. In answer to several questions including 'Who participated in violence against Jews?' and 'How did violent actions spread, taking hold of bystanders and transforming them into perpetrators?' Wildt finds that terror 'from above' was supported by increasing and expanding anti-Semitic violence 'from below', violence that growing numbers of people participated in or tolerated.<sup>89</sup> In particular, he reaches two conclusions: 'The November pogrom in Treuchtlingen was not the work of isolated SA gangs but rather the rampage of an entire town. Those who did not become perpetrators looked the other way and did not find the courage to resist. The reports mention only a few people who tried to help the victims.'<sup>90</sup> Moreover, he implies that Treuchtlingen was typical of the rest of German society: 'The pogrom in Treuchtlingen gives us an idea of how many "normal" Germans were involved in the violent assaults against Jews in 1938.'<sup>91</sup>

Wildt's conclusions about violence against Jews centre on 'Who?' and 'How many?' To support his argument, he describes (in addition to the legislative persecution) sixty incidents in Treuchtlingen and throughout Germany in general (Figure 1). In twenty-six of these he states or implies the violence was carried out by the SA, SS or other NSDAP organisations. In a further seven, Hitler Youth or youths in general were the perpetrators.<sup>92</sup>

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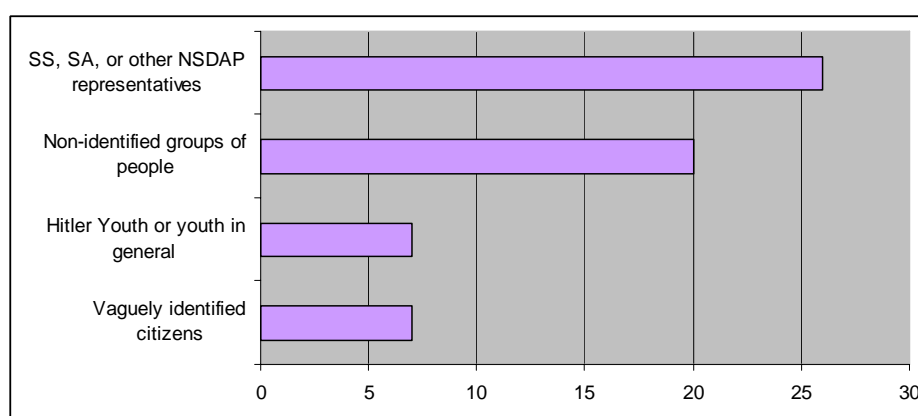
<sup>89</sup> Wildt, 'Violence', pp. 183-184, 209.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p. 198.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p. 209.

<sup>92</sup> Even though the ostensible objects of his attention are 'normal Germans', Wildt mixes his references to official regime representatives (such as SS, SA or Hitler Youth) with references to the 'ordinary' people without clearly distinguishing between them, implying that the distinctions are of little significance. How much the actions of the 'normal' people mirror the activities of the Nazis remains an open question. It is not appropriate historical practice to use evidence in a way that merges them without justifying their interchangeability. The issue of a 'mythical barrier' between Germans and Nazis which acts as an exculpatory tool to place the 'ordinary people' at a distance from the 'perpetrators' is the subject of discussion among historians. This is a valid concern. But without some form of distinction being made, it is impossible to discern accurately what did happen with the majority of the population who did not sign up to active participation in the Nazi programme. Eric Johnson reminds us that a degree of separation remains necessary in order to hold those who wilfully implemented the Nazi terror accountable. See Mark Wolfgram, 'Rediscovering Narratives of German Resistance: Opposing the Nazi "Terror-State"', *Rethinking History*, 10:2 (2006), pp. 204, 207; Y.

Of the remaining twenty-seven, he identifies just seven with vaguely specific terms such as: ‘a number of Gunzenhausen citizens’, ‘train passengers’, ‘local residents’, ‘a group of town citizens’, and ‘a horde of residents’.<sup>93</sup> He does not specifically identify who participated in the other twenty incidents, although for some he uses non-specific terms such as ‘jeering crowd’, ‘people’, or ‘enraged mob’.<sup>94</sup> The general context indicates that Wildt considers these people to be ‘normal’ Germans but he appears unable to use his evidence to effectively argue that large numbers of people actively participated alongside the SA and SS in violent actions.



**Figure 1: Violence against Jews: participants listed by Wildt**

In terms of how many people these mobs comprised, he gives little information. The only figures supporting his statements about how many ‘normal’ Germans were involved in the assaults are for Leutershausen and Treuchtlingen. Fifty-two people were tried before the courts (thirty-nine convicted) in 1946 for offenses committed during the Treuchtlingen pogrom.<sup>95</sup> In a town of about 4,200 people, this suggests just over one percent of the population were identified as participating in the pogrom.<sup>96</sup> Approximately fifty citizens of about 1600-2000 Leutershausen residents broke into the synagogue and vandalized it, of which probably a fair number were uniformed representatives of the regime.<sup>97</sup> There is no doubt that Jews experienced anti-Semitism in Leutershausen and other witnesses testified

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Michal Bodemann, ‘Eclipse of Memory: German Representations of Auschwitz in the Early Postwar Period’, *New German Critique*, 75 (1998), pp. 57-89; and Johnson, *Nazi Terror*, pp. 21, 483-484.

<sup>93</sup> Wildt, ‘Violence’, pp. 188, 190, 196, 199.

<sup>94</sup> Wildt, ‘Violence’, pp. 187, 199, 200, 202.

<sup>95</sup> Wildt, ‘Violence’, p. 198.

<sup>96</sup> It is reasonable, however, to assume that more than these were involved but managed to escape being identified or brought to justice.

<sup>97</sup> Wildt, ‘Violence’, p. 196.

its presence even before the Nazi era.<sup>98</sup> Furthermore, in small towns such as these, fifty people is a frighteningly large number. However, Wildt's own figures do not convincingly demonstrate that more than a small percentage of the population of these towns participated actively in the terror. In neither case could it be said that what occurred was 'the rampage of an entire town'.

Wildt bases his argument on detailed evidence drawn from just one community (which in any case does not really demonstrate what he claims that it demonstrates) along with a number of anecdotes from other communities which he implies are typical. This is a form of sleight-of-hand. He footnotes his essay with a comment that examples from other regions and localities confirm that Treuchtlingen was not a special case but he does not provide any evidence to support this.<sup>99</sup> He simply notes that the essay is a preliminary study for a larger work that eventually appeared in 2007.<sup>100</sup> But in drawing his conclusions, he manipulates the evidence and glosses over the implications of statistics showing that participation actually may have been fairly limited. It is entirely misleading for him to claim that he has demonstrated the 'rampage of an entire town' to give us an idea of 'how many "normal" Germans were involved in the violent assaults against Jews in 1938'. These claims go substantially beyond what his evidence is able to demonstrate.

A second example of over-generalising from evidence (that is, asserting typicality) can occur when historians make a single example representative of the whole. For example, Kaplan, Bankier, Bartov, Friedländer, and Fritz Stern all assert that anti-Semitic attitudes were so pervasive that they extended even to anti-fascists. As evidence, such historians are fond of pointing to Thomas Mann.<sup>101</sup> Novelist, Nobel Prize laureate and anti-Nazi, Thomas Mann left Germany with his Jewish wife when Hitler assumed power. His diaries reveal many disquieting details about his personal life and thoughts, among which were two entries:

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<sup>98</sup> Hilde (Tzipora) Jochsberger, in Carol Ingall, 'Hava N'Halela: Tzipora Jochsberger and Her Vision for the Hebrew Arts School', *Journal of Jewish Education*, 71: 2 (2005), p. 203, and Martin Anson, in *The Living Memory of the Jewish Community* oral history project, <http://sounds.bl.uk/TextPage.aspx?page=backgroundJewish-Holocaust-survivors> (1989), n.p.

<sup>99</sup> Wildt, 'Violence', p. 183, footnote 8.

<sup>100</sup> Michael Wildt, *Volksgemeinschaft als Selbstermächtigung. Gewalt gegen Juden in der deutschen Provinz 1919 bis 1939* (Hamburg, 2007). The basic premise of this larger work continues the theme of the preliminary essay.

<sup>101</sup> See Kaplan, *Dignity and Despair*, p. 26, Bankier, *Germans*, p. 69, Bartov, *Disputed Histories*, p. 206, Friedländer, *Years of Persecution*, pp. 13-14, and Fritz Stern, *Dreams and Delusions, The Drama of German History* (London : 1987), pp. 180-181.

But for all that, might not something deeply significant and revolutionary be taking place in Germany? The Jews . . . it is no calamity after all . . . that the domination of the legal system by the Jews has been ended. Secret, disquieting, persistent musings. Come what may, much will remain that in a higher sense is repellent, base, and un-German. But I am beginning to suspect that in spite of everything this process is one of those that have two sides to them.<sup>102</sup>

I could have a certain amount of understanding for the rebellion against the Jewish element were it not that the Jewish spirit exercises a necessary control over the German element, the withdrawal of which is dangerous; left to themselves the Germans are so stupid as to lump people of my type in the same category and drive me out with the rest.<sup>103</sup>

Such comments, considering his family circumstances, are surprising and contradict other remarks he made decrying the ‘weed of antisemitism’.<sup>104</sup> He was also on record as saying: ‘Antisemitism is the disgrace of any educated and culturally engaged person.’<sup>105</sup> Clearly, given the apparent degree of inconsistency, such statements require closer investigation in order to locate the real extent of his anti-Semitism. Alfred Hoelzel is one of the surprisingly few analysts who have attempted to locate his real attitudes.<sup>106</sup> Hoelzel, like Saul Friedländer, recognises Mann’s ambivalences, his ‘split consciousness’, in regard to Jewish people and also in regard to German society and fellow intellectuals.<sup>107</sup> Hoelzel’s conclusion is that the picture of Mann is ‘complex, ambiguous and changes decisively with key events’ but his vigorous activity on behalf of persecuted Jews means:

One can quibble all one wants about minor details; the fact remains that few other non-Jewish personalities of renown supported these Jewish causes so generously and energetically . . . in spite of insensitivities and sometimes jarring lapses, Mann rallied to the Jews’ support when it counted most.<sup>108</sup>

Nonetheless, other historians find Mann’s diary musings useful to help make a case for general opinions. According to Kaplan: ‘There seems to have been little public

<sup>102</sup> 10 April 1933, Thomas Mann, *Tagebücher: 1933-1934* (Frankfurt am Main, 1977), p. 46. Trans.: Richard and Clara Winston, *Thomas Mann Diaries 1918-1939* (London, 1983), p. 150.

<sup>103</sup> 20 April 1933, Mann, *Tagebücher*, p. 54. Trans.: Winston, p. 153.

<sup>104</sup> Alfred Hoelzel, ‘Thomas Mann’s Attitudes Toward Jews and Judaism: An Investigation of Biography and Oeuvre’, *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, 6 (1990), p. 236.

<sup>105</sup> Colm Tóibín, ‘I Could Sleep with All of Them’, review of *In the Shadow of the Magic Mountain: The Erika and Klaus Mann Story*, by Andrea Weiss, *London Review of Books*, [http://www.lrb.co.uk/v30/n21/toib01\\_.html](http://www.lrb.co.uk/v30/n21/toib01_.html) (6 Nov. 2008), n.p.

<sup>106</sup> Hoelzel, pp. 229-254.

<sup>107</sup> Friedländer, *Years of Persecution*, p. 13. This ‘split consciousness’ is a concept not widely explored in the secondary sources in general. However, it is germane to the question of Jewish/non-Jewish relationships and should not be disregarded. Melita Maschmann calls it ‘fatal schizophrenia’: Melita Maschmann, *Account Rendered: A Dossier on my Former Self* (London, 1964), p. 41.

<sup>108</sup> Hoelzel, pp. 247, 249.

complaint—and silent endorsement—about the ousting of the Jews. When the Nazis purged the courts, even as staunch an anti-Nazi as Thomas Mann approved.’<sup>109</sup> Bankier is referring to Mann when he says: ‘Just how far these wishes [to remove Jews from influential positions] permeated German society is shown by the fact that even anti-nazis subscribed to the measure.’<sup>110</sup> The manner in which they quote Mann suggests that his opinions are indicative of opinions in general and that he is typical of anti-Nazis.<sup>111</sup> Nevertheless, just one example does not justify their implications. Pierre Ayçoberry advises that the use of ‘parallel biographies’ for any particular community under the microscope is a better way to establish typicality.<sup>112</sup> By this he means placing accounts from similar groups of people alongside each other and comparing them to build a more representative picture. One individual cannot be deemed representative of his or her community without adequate corroboration.

A further transgression occurs when historians generalise from a few examples and then take a small step from generalisation to using terms of quantification which support their arguments. Some use evaluative terminology liberally when discussing reactions to the regime and to the outcasts of society:

The great majority of the German people soon became devoted to Hitler and they supported him to the bitter end in 1945.<sup>113</sup>

The vast majority [of the German population] cannot be characterized as having a sense of solidarity with the victims. True, there were other instances of goodwill; but, all told, they involved only a tiny fraction of the population . . . The majority, however, seem to have been openly hostile.<sup>114</sup>

Many Germans participated in persecuting Jews, either in their official positions . . . or in the course of their daily lives; most other Germans either applauded, ignored, or denied the persecution.<sup>115</sup>

The majority of Germans accepted the steps taken by the regime and . . . looked the other way.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Kaplan, *Dignity and Despair*, p. 26.

<sup>110</sup> Bankier, *Germans*, p. 69.

<sup>111</sup> Although not relevant to the discussion here, it is evident from the full text of the original diaries that Mann’s opinions did not represent anti-Semitism as clear-cut as Kaplan’s and Bankier’s interpretations would have us believe. His disgust for the situation in general and his personal animosity towards Jewish critic Alfred Kerr must be accounted for when interpreting these diary entries.

<sup>112</sup> Pierre Ayçoberry, *The Social History of the Third Reich, 1933-1945* (New York, 1999), p. 7.

<sup>113</sup> Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, p. 1.

<sup>114</sup> Bankier, *Germans*, pp. 120-121.

<sup>115</sup> Kaplan, *Dignity and Despair*, p. 200.

<sup>116</sup> Friedländer, *Years of Persecution*, p. 324.



Quantifying statements like these become defining confirmations of hypotheses and remain fixed in the mind of readers. While a history written without expressive language might appear dry and pedantic, the use of terms such as ‘most’, ‘majority’, or ‘vast’ can quickly form the foundation of a theory and must be used with great care. Where they are used, the onus is on historians to prove their point with solid, incontestable evidence.

Quantification is sometimes implied rather than stated. For example, it is frequently asserted in the secondary literature that mercenary attitudes towards the plight of Jewish people were widespread. Historians who make this claim, however, fail to mention that the persecution of Jewish people benefited only a tiny percentage of the non-Jewish population. Less than one percent of the population was Jewish, so the distribution of personal goods, the filling of vacated positions or other personal gain from denunciations could not have profited more than a small number of Germans.<sup>117</sup> This undermines the implication that Germans in general were motivated by the desire to profit from Jewish misfortune.<sup>118</sup>

So far, we can see that some historians are basing their arguments on evidence from which they have unjustifiably extrapolated, represented typicality, or suggested quantification. A further problem in the way historians use their evidence occurs where they speak too confidently on the basis of flimsy evidence. Bankier and Kershaw are among those who make claims that are not supported by solid evidence.

On the topic of attitudes toward Nazi persecution of Jews, Bankier says: ‘There is conclusive evidence that on the whole the population consented to attacks on Jews as long as these neither damaged non-Jews nor harmed the interests of the country, particularly its

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<sup>117</sup> Frank Bajohr does, however, go further than mere implication of generally opportunistic behaviour. He estimates that 100,000 inhabitants of Hamburg and the North German regions bought possessions from 30,000 Jewish households at auction in the years 1941-1945. Extrapolation based on this calculation indicates that less than 2 percent of the German population bought Jewish goods. Bajohr, ‘Aryanisation’, p. 279.

<sup>118</sup> Bajohr quantifies the motivations of buyers of Jewish companies as forty percent active and unscrupulous profiteers, forty percent ‘sleeping partners’ who inconspicuously profited and twenty percent as well-meaning and sympathetic buyers. This is based on a sample of three hundred cases in Hamburg. However, interpretative issues of subjectivity and typicality are raised by his argument. Frank Bajohr, ‘The ‘Aryanization’ of Jewish Companies and German Society: The Example of Hamburg’ in *Probing the Depths of German Antisemitism: German Society and the Persecution of the Jews 1933-1941*, ed. David Bankier (New York, 2000), pp. 242-244.

reputation abroad.<sup>119</sup> He uses regime reports to dismantle previously-held theories that the population was either terrorized into silence or brainwashed and mobilized behind the Nazis. According to Bankier, the reports make clear what really happened:

The Jewish theme was instrumental for some discontented sectors in expressing their dissatisfaction with the Nazi system. The Gestapo stations in Münster and Dortmund correctly captured the reality when they stated that the public went to Jewish shops not as a demonstration of solidarity with the persecuted, but as a way of expressing disillusionment with the regime. Furthermore, people could support the Nazis and yet disapprove of measures against the Jews. A striking example of rejecting Jewish persecution from an antisemitic stand is provided by a report from Harburg-Wilhelmsburg. The local Gestapo admitted that the public did not just fail to understand the attacks on the Jews, but actually condemned them. The reason for this attitude was given by the commentator himself: people felt that the maltreatment of Jews was counterproductive, since it turned them into martyrs; the party thus achieved the opposite of its original objective.<sup>120</sup>

Here Bankier affirms the correctness of the Gestapo conclusions but he provides no evidence beyond the opinions of the Gestapo commentators, ideologues with clearly defined agendas, who have come to their own interpretations about motivations among the people. Nothing is heard from the population itself or from any other source. Using the information in the reports he successfully demonstrates that he can disprove the premise of a terrorized population; the people were neither silent nor brainwashed. But Bankier fails to substantiate his (somewhat contradictory) replacement theory of consent for anti-Jewish measures coupled with dissent against the same measures where they did not suit personal interests. His ‘conclusive evidence’ consists solely of a subjective opinion from a problematic source.

Solid support for arguments is just as important when a historian argues from silences in his or her sources. For example, Kershaw draws conclusions about the reactions of the people to Jewish deportations from Bavaria on the basis of what is *not* found in regime reports. He says:

Most [SD] reports fail to mention any reactions [among the population to deportations] . . . For the rest, the silence is evocative. The absence of registered reactions in the sources is probably not a grotesque distortion of popular attitudes. Not only intimidation but widespread indifference towards the remaining tiny Jewish minority explains the lack of involvement in their deportation.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Bankier, *Germans*, pp. 73-74.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>121</sup> Kershaw, *Popular Opinion*, pp. 362-363. Kershaw anticipates attacks on his suppositions by remarking in the introduction to his 2008 work: ‘Arguments from silence remain open to objections whichever way they

Because the archives have little to say about how people reacted, he assumes firstly that they were silent and secondly that the silence was the result of intimidation or indifference. Nothing in his text substantiates these suppositions. Bankier also makes assumptions about silences in the sources but locates a different meaning for the absence of negative reactions to anti-Jewish measures. He believes this type of silence indicates that the persecution was consonant with public desire.<sup>122</sup> In dealing with the gaps and silences in their evidence, Bankier and Kershaw appear to be following a principle of Roman law which remains extant in modern law: *Quis tacet consentire videtur*.<sup>123</sup>

It is a legitimate and logical option for historians to suggest explanations where sources have made no comment on a particular issue. For example, Detlev Peukert provides two possible explanations for the silence of the population when persecution targeted the political left at the beginning of the regime. He believes that people either supported the cleaning out of 'Reds' or kept quiet due to fear of themselves becoming targets of the terror.<sup>124</sup> Robert Kann suggests this is a legitimate procedure for historians dealing with the distant past and that there is a high degree of probability that we can locate attitudes of individuals from nonverbal or informal verbal reactions. He says that actions or non-actions from which meaning can be ascertained can be substituted for verbal declarations. However, before historians make reasoned assumptions where there is little supporting evidence they must be careful to check their own agendas. Kann warns: 'If one turns from the verbal method to that of observation by concludent action (*sic*), the decisive problem is and remains that of the impartiality of the historian. This . . . is truly germane to the whole realm of historical research.'<sup>125</sup> To put it another way, if the historian has drawn *a priori* conclusions, there is a risk of attributing meaning to a gap in the evidence without considering possible alternatives.

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fall.' Alternatively, because he makes this comment in the context of re-issue of his original essays, he may be responding to objections that have arisen since he first argued the point. Kershaw, *Final Solution*, p. 10.

<sup>122</sup> Bankier, *Germans*, p. 69.

<sup>123</sup> 'He who keeps quiet is assumed to approve.'

<sup>124</sup> Peukert, p. 57.

<sup>125</sup> Robert A. Kann, 'Public Opinion Research: A Contribution to Historical Method', *Political Science Quarterly*, 73: 3 (1958), pp. 381, 382. Tim Mason emphasizes the necessity for historians to engage with self-critical reflection of identity because the subject of Nazism 'assaults the deepest roots of the student's identity.' Tim Mason, *Social Policy in the Third Reich: The Working Class and the 'National Community'* (Providence, 1993), p. 283.

Historians should be prepared to give their readers opportunity to weigh up possible alternate explanations for the apparent silences. Silence can have many different meanings. For example, if we momentarily equate bystander silence with bystander non-action we can draw a parallel with a group of people who watch a man publicly assault his wife. If they fail to intervene, their silence is not necessarily evidence of their indifference to or approval of what is happening. Their non-action could be caused by fear, uncertainty, shock, paralysis or any other number of emotional and even physical barriers to response. Approval is perhaps the least common motive for non-intervention of bystanders. Our comprehension of different types of responses is helped by the research of social psychologists who have investigated non-action by bystanders in cases such as the 1964 murder of Kitty Genovese in New York, who was stabbed to death while numerous people nearby failed to assist her.<sup>126</sup> They have established that the behaviour of bystanders is the result of complex processes which do not match the assumptions made by historians who suggest simplistic explanations. The principle of *Quis tacet consentire videtur* may exist in law, but it is not necessarily correct.

If the meaning of silence or non-action is open to a variety of interpretations even within a modern democracy, how much more is it questionable within a political system where speaking up or taking action has the potential for severe consequences? Historians have been able to show that informants were not as ubiquitous as people believed and consequences were not always inevitable for people who did speak up, but this does not negate the fact that people *believed* they were actually under threat.<sup>127</sup>

It is also important to ascertain context by taking into account the effects of the Nazi regime on Germany as a whole. One consequence of Nazi rule was ‘atomisation’ of society with separate communities finding themselves under different kinds of pressure.<sup>128</sup> While the Jewish people were always the key targets of the Nazis, other groups were also attacked, such as the Communists in the early stages of the regime or at a later stage, the

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<sup>126</sup> For the background to the case of Kitty Genovese, see Bibb Latané and John Darley, *The Unresponsive Bystander: Why doesn't he help?* (New York, 1970), pp. 1-6, and Philip Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect: Understanding How Good People Turn Evil* (New York, 2007), p. 314. Research on the ‘Bystander’, including the factors which point away from approval as an explanation for silence, will be discussed later in this chapter.

<sup>127</sup> Robert Gellately, ‘The Gestapo and German Society: Political Denunciation in the Gestapo Case Files’, *Journal of Modern History*, 60:4 (1988), p. 657.

<sup>128</sup> See William Sheridan Allen, *The Nazi Seizure of Power: The Experience of a Single German Town 1930-1935* (Chicago, 1965), pp. 209-226.

Catholics. These communities were never subjected to the increasingly perverse levels of vicious and destructive policy as the Jewish people were. But we must bear in mind the reactions of non-Communists during the persecution directed against Communists and how non-Catholics behaved during the periods when Catholics were specific targets. The epithet 'indifferent' is the most likely choice of description for the behaviour of Germans unaffected by any particular aspect of persecution. The people never rose in united defence of the Jews but neither did they arise in united defence of institutionalized people who were 'euthanized', Communists, Catholics, Roma or Sinti, homosexuals, or Jehovah's Witnesses. As in any society, for the most part people respond to what affects them directly.

Given the context of an atomised German society under the Nazis, it appears more valid, when searching to understand the attitudes and behaviours of 'ordinary' Germans, to examine how communities responded to the specific Nazi policies that affected them. By assessing the information that surrounds any gap representing lack of consciousness or attention to victims, we can possibly gain meaningful insight into why the plight of Jewish Germans and other victims passed under the radar of so many people. Likewise, because the vast majority of the population had no connection to Jews it is more useful to examine the attitudes of those who actually came into contact with them. There is a danger that Kershaw's conclusion of indifference may obscure the places or occasions in German society when the activities of individuals who actually encountered Jewish Germans displayed a *lack* of indifference.

Silences are familiar themes for historians, particularly as they address the important questions arising in other arenas, such as the silences of Allies in the face of pre-1945 warnings of atrocity, of Germans steeped in post-war shame, or of survivors trying to cope with unspeakable devastation.<sup>129</sup> But there is a multiplicity of reasons that can in principle explain each instance and historians must not confine themselves to just one possibility. Kershaw does not leave us with the option of weighing up if the silences mean other things but simply asserts that the answer lies solely with the indifference of the people.

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<sup>129</sup> See Klemens von Klemperer, *German Resistance against Hitler: The Search for Allies Abroad, 1938-1945* (Oxford, 1993), pp.5-6, 440; Bodemann, p. 62; and Ruth Wajnryb, *The Silence: How tragedy shapes talk* (Crows Nest, NSW, 2001), pp. 276-280.

For historians other than Kershaw, difficulty in interpreting silences appears to lead to inconsistencies and alternative explanations where it suits the overall argument. For Marion Kaplan, the absence of one thing appears to indicate the presence of something else when she writes that ‘there seems to have been little public complaint—and silent endorsement—about the ousting of Jews.’<sup>130</sup> Here silence is equated with endorsement.<sup>131</sup> Bankier, as cited by Kaplan, also finds silence from the people over the removal of Jews from the judicial system means they endorsed the action.<sup>132</sup> But he takes a different approach to silences under other circumstances. In relation to Nazi persecution against churches his implication is that the churches were silent yet resentful about the anti-Bible campaign.<sup>133</sup> Here silence means something else. It does not mean endorsement, it means resentment. On the other hand, when silences are broken, such as when the silence over the ‘Aryan principle’ was broken by a few protesting voices in army circles, Bankier boldly states that we should not attach any importance to them.<sup>134</sup> These fluid interpretations are more likely indicators of *a priori* assumptions or pre-existing viewpoints than logical deduction based on considering all the available evidence.

Even though arguments from silences can be legitimate, they are an ‘open space’ in the sources where historians can ascribe meaning based on their own biases without providing alternate options of interpretation. It is reasonable to suggest some answers which are more probable than others but the historian must be prepared to provide a rigorous argument which draws on all the available evidence from a balanced variety of sources.

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<sup>130</sup> Kaplan, *Dignity and Despair*, p. 26.

<sup>131</sup> Kaplan’s supporting evidence for her ‘silent endorsement’ comment is confined to cross-referencing Bankier’s opinions, Mann’s diary entry cited earlier in this chapter, and an example from a personal testimony where a woman expresses satisfaction to her Jewish neighbour that her daughter has chosen to marry the suitor (of two) who had the best prospects, improved since all the firings at court.

<sup>132</sup> Kaplan’s citation of Bankier draws attention to another problem: the perpetuation of errors as historians quote each other to reinforce the same points. This merry-go-round usage of secondary sources is potentially a favourite way to ensure a historian’s argument has backing. For example, Pierre Ayçoberry has based almost an entire book on secondary sources, in spite of the cover claiming his work is ‘original research’: Pierre Ayçoberry, *The Social History of the Third Reich, 1933-1945* (New York, 1999). By doing this, he risks transferring any error resulting from misuse of evidence to the next generation of commentary. While it is not possible to avoid drawing on the research of other historians (as demonstrated throughout this present study), it is important to retain a healthy sense of any historian’s prejudices for or against sources, not to mention his or her personal or political background, educational influences and individual biases. See Mason, p. 283.

<sup>133</sup> Bankier, *Germans*, p. 69.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

## The Failure to Use Other Valuable Sources

Further to the problems historians have with source selection and their use of evidence, another problem surfaces when they under-utilise other sources which could act as a corrective to the limitations of their preferred sources. In this section we shall examine two types of sources which historians in general do not recognise as valuable for this purpose. The first type of source bears resemblances to the regime-generated reports discussed in this chapter and the Sopade reports. These are the *Inside Germany Reports*, which were published in New York by the American Friends of German Freedom, an organisation of anti-fascist refugees from Nazi Germany.<sup>135</sup> The second type of source is the accumulated knowledge available from other disciplines, most particularly in the social sciences, which can make valuable contributions to our understanding of life in the Third Reich.

Bankier is one of the few historians who comments on the *Inside Germany Reports* as he discusses Jewish-German relations under the Third Reich. He has little use for them because he doubts the motivations and agendas of the United States-based refugees who compiled them. He claims that the reports ‘do not stand up to critical scrutiny’ because they take an uncritical approach to stories of support provided to Jewish people by non-Jewish acquaintances. Where the reports publish information about assistance that was rendered, he responds with incredulity: ‘Typical of this uncritical and apologetic approach is the picture of . . . a country in which there were *thousands* of instances of non-conformist behaviour, and Jews were secretly helped in every conceivable way.’<sup>136</sup> Bankier believes the anti-fascist writers were actively trying to foster images of ‘another Germany’ and that their information was merely a projection of their own wishes. Because it contrasts sharply with what he finds in the SD reports, he finds they have little value as sources. He says: ‘Obviously this picture, which contradicts any other available source, must be interpreted as ‘German exiles’ apologetics’.<sup>137</sup> Unfortunately, Bankier has not acknowledged that as a category of source, the *Inside Germany Reports* have origins very similar to the regime-generated or Sopade reports: a specific group with particular

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<sup>135</sup> *Inside Germany Reports: 1-25* (New York, 15 April 1939 – August 1943).

<sup>136</sup> Bankier, *Germans*, p. 118. Italics are Bankier’s.

<sup>137</sup> Bankier, *Germans*, p. 118. However, this does not prevent Bankier from quoting *Inside Germany Reports* on three other occasions: to reinforce points about abandonment of Jews by former friends, how non-Jews behaved for motives of personal profit and the virulence of anti-Jewish propaganda. This implies he finds this particular information to be reliable information because it cuts against the grain of the reports’ self-interest. He does not refer to any of the reports which present contrasting information. Bankier, *Germans*, pp. 121, 140, 144.

viewpoints or agendas gathers data from informants within the grass-roots of society to build a picture of life and attitudes amongst the general population of Nazi Germany. Hence it is legitimate to assume that the reports will demonstrate similar strengths and weaknesses when subjected to critical scrutiny. When Bankier claims the reports contradict other sources he is no doubt referring to his favoured sources, the Nazi regime reports, which of course operate from a different ideological perspective and have their own agendas. Contradictions should be expected under these circumstances. Whether Bankier can accurately claim that the *Inside Germany Reports* contradict any other available source will be easier to determine when personal narratives are assessed later in this dissertation.

There are two issues to consider as we assess the validity of Bankier's position on *Inside Germany Reports*. Firstly, is he correct about the agendas of the anti-fascist refugees? Secondly, if he is, how much does it matter to the credibility of the reports? Recent research by Marjorie Lamberti asserts that these exiles, in their anticipation of a post-Nazi Germany, focussed on a vision of Germany's reconstruction into a viable democracy and rehabilitation into the world community.<sup>138</sup> This concept required a lenient peace, along with purging notions of the German population's collective responsibility for Nazi offences. After the war, the anti-Fascists paid scant regard to the full horror of what had been done to the Jews as they sought to keep distinctions between the people and the regime. What happened was a Nazi crime, not the crime of the people.<sup>139</sup> If Lamberti has correctly analysed the situation, this still leaves the issue of whether the credibility of the reports is at stake. Bankier fails to acknowledge that even if we allow for agendas among the anti-fascist exiles, this does not necessarily repudiate the information conveyed. Just as we cannot completely discard regime-generated reports because of their flaws, Bankier cannot throw out the information in the *Inside Germany Reports*, effectively falsifying it, on the basis of alleged politically manipulative journalism. No legitimate claim about whether or not Jewish Germans were supported by other Germans can be made either way until the *Inside Germany Reports* are systematically weighed against all the other available sources, including personal testimonies. Most significantly, Bankier's argument for

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<sup>138</sup> Marjorie Lamberti, 'German Antifascist Refugees in America and the Public Debate on "What Should be Done with Germany after Hitler," 1941–1945', *Central European History*, 40:2 (2007), pp. 279–305.

<sup>139</sup> It should be noted here that Lamberti's main focus is on individuals who compromised the leadership of German refugee organizations in the United States during the war. She does not directly address the agendas of the *Inside Germany Reports* but her clear implication is that, in spite of the editor's reliability and realism, they were influenced by the political machinations of the individuals she discusses. Lamberti, pp. 283, 285–286, 296.



discarding these sources applies equally to the regime-generated reports he favours. The methodological problems of the *Inside Germany Reports*, especially pertaining to sources of information and bias, are no greater than those of the SD reports. As we saw earlier in this chapter, the problem lies not with the validity of their use, but with over-dependence on them. While neither source type should be discarded simply because of ulterior motives in their compilation, Bankier has applied uneven methodological standards in his selection of sources.

Putting Bankier's objections aside, how can the *Inside Germany Reports* be used to inform us and give us new understanding? If they are surveyed in their entirety, they provide information on many aspects of the situation in Germany, from people's opinions on politics to the restrictions on food. They also devote considerable space drawing the attention of readers to the situation of the Jews. They report on compulsory labour and its indignities, the effectiveness of anti-Jewish propaganda, food deprivation and loss of rights, deportations, anti-Semitic attitudes amongst 'ordinary' people, the unresponsiveness of the world at large, and loss or maintenance of Jewish relationships with 'Aryans'. They include long letters from Jewish escapees which detail specifics of their horrific experiences and the worsening of the situation.<sup>140</sup> The reports also reproduce Nazi-controlled newspaper articles (*Stuttgart National Socialist Courier*) which complain bitterly that 'the German people are friendly towards Jews' as they scathingly recount stories of compassion shown toward Jewish people and attack the participants as fit to be executed.<sup>141</sup>

An interesting aspect of the reports is that they demonstrate self-awareness of their weaknesses and appear to anticipate the need for critical scrutiny. Informant backgrounds are regularly (but not always) provided with specific identity details omitted, for example, 'a young German sailor', 'a young Nazi, on leave from duty in Poland', 'an elderly Jewess from Berlin'.<sup>142</sup> Descriptions of informants frequently include their professional qualifications, descriptions of places of work (sometimes with employee numbers), and the dates the informants left Germany. Numerous letters are reproduced; typically they are

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<sup>140</sup> *Inside Germany Reports*, No. 3 (15 June 1939), pp. 4, 18; No.7 (10 Nov. 1939), p. 9; No. 8 (7 Dec. 1939), pp. 4, 12, 13; No. 9 (Jan.-Feb. 1940), p. 17; No. 13 (July 1940), pp. 17-21; No. 15 (Dec. 1940), pp. 7, 12-14; No. 18 (July 1941), pp. 3, 13; No. 20 (Dec. 1941), pp. 9-10; No. 21 (Feb. 1942), pp. 13-15; No.23 (Nov. 1942), pp. 7-10.

<sup>141</sup> *Inside Germany Reports*, No. 21 (Feb. 1942), pp. 13-15.

<sup>142</sup> *Inside Germany Reports*, No. 8 (7 Dec. 1939), p. 4; No. 11 (April 1940), p. 10; No. 21 (Feb. 1942), p. 14.

dated with regions of origin identified but the writers themselves are denoted only by alphabet letters. Sometimes informant notes are more extensive:

By roundabout route, we received from Berlin the following letter written by an older Social Democratic worker. We reproduce it in full, not because it contains any sensational information, but because it is typical for that large section of workers who remained anti-fascist.<sup>143</sup>

Regions and sectors of society are usually included, for example, a special supplement on public opinion, labelled 'via Paris', is headed: 'Report from an Infantry Regiment in Potsdam': The reporter from this section of the Reichswehr says ...',<sup>144</sup>

The *Inside Germany Reports* also alert readers to the purpose of the reports, their political orientation, limitations and integrity:

Readers of Inside Germany Reports know that the only desire of those who compile the reports is to try to give an accurate picture of present conditions in Germany, as they exist and not as we would like to see them. It is hardly necessary to emphasize the extreme difficulties in the way of giving fair evaluation of public opinion and events in a country where, not only is a Gallup poll out of the question, but free expression of opinion and accurate reportage of occurrences is almost entirely inhibited by measures of the government. Below we have given a number of reports just submitted to us by observers in a number of factories and groups in different sections of the Reich. If the reports seem to contradict others that we have recently published, our readers should remember that each report is valid only for the district or special group which is purports to describe, further that public opinion in Germany, as elsewhere is a constantly changing phenomenon.<sup>145</sup>

These reports are of value to historians in several ways. Firstly, they are useful for those who study how information was disseminated and how rumours worked – their trajectories, their impact and their accuracy. One significant report entitled 'Mercy Killings or...' details evidence which points to institutional killings.<sup>146</sup> Published in May 1941, the information must have been received after the previously published report of 14 February 1941. But we know that institutional murders were well underway by October 1939, a valuable point of comparison as we search to learn what people knew, and when.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> *Inside Germany Reports*, No. 17 (May 1941), p. 8.

<sup>144</sup> *Inside Germany Reports*, No. 3 (15 June 1939), p. 18.

<sup>145</sup> *Inside Germany Reports*, No. 3 (15 June 1939), p. 15. See also No. 9 (Jan-Feb. 1940), p. 1, and No. 14 (Oct. 1940), p.1, for further comments on origins of reports, their political orientation, and attempts to retain integrity of reporting.

<sup>146</sup> *Inside Germany Reports*, No. 17 (May 1941), p. 11.

<sup>147</sup> Ian Kershaw, *Hitler 1936-1945: Nemesis* (London, 2000), p. 253. Note that Jochen Klepper's diary records the news as early as 2 May 1940 and William Shirer first hears of the killings on 21 September 1940. See Jochen Klepper, *Unter dem Schatten deiner Flügel: Aus den Tagebüchern der Jahre 1932-1942*

Secondly, the *Inside Germany Reports* contain a great deal of information about people's opinions on a large number of topics. As will be repeatedly emphasized throughout this chapter, a key methodological rule is to ensure that sources are used in 'symbiotic relationship' with each other.<sup>148</sup> With this in mind, the *Inside Germany Reports* are useful to examine in conjunction with Nazi and Sopade reports. Thirdly, as we evaluate the knowledge and responses of the Allies, they can help us determine what kind of information was actually available to other nations. In May 1941, *Inside Germany Reports* published in New York an alert to the Nazi predilection for mass murder, long before the 1944 date noted by some official American sources.<sup>149</sup> Fourthly, and most importantly for this dissertation, the *Inside Germany Reports* contain a number of extensive, detailed and contemporaneously reported testimonies from Jewish authors that can be compared with others as we investigate what they had to say about their interactions with non-Jewish Germans.

The mindset of a historian in the approach to these sources makes a difference to how they are interpreted. An exercise to test the differences that pre-existing viewpoints could make to an interpretation uses the following passages as an example. One report presents a list of perceived attitudes amongst Germans, including the following:

The Ostrich Attitude. Many otherwise decent Germans have always stuck their heads in the sand and refused to believe that the atrocities of the Nazis were as bad as they were painted, because they had never seen them with their own eyes. Many still are not as shocked by their leaders and by what is going on in conquered countries as they should be if they grasped the full truth.<sup>150</sup>

The report then suggests a response:

Report on events in occupied countries, tell them specifically and graphically about pillaging, murders, firing squads. Large figures and statistics summarizing murders of hostages, etc. are not the most effective. Give brief incidental reports constantly and the reports should close with some statement such as: "This murder has made a thousand new and bitter enemies for the Nazis. What have you done, so that one day you can prove that you were in no way responsible?"<sup>151</sup>

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(Stuttgart, 1956), p. 876, and William Shirer, *Berlin Diary: The Journal of a Foreign Correspondent 1934-1941* (London, 1941), p. 401.

<sup>148</sup> Weber, "Mass of Trash", p. 31.

<sup>149</sup> Richard Breitman, *U.S. Intelligence and the Nazis* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 12.

<sup>150</sup> *Inside Germany Reports*, No. 24 (Feb. 1943), p. 9.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*

There are two ways this passage could be interpreted. It could be warning Germans to prepare an exculpatory defence in the face of impending defeat or it could be a genuine attempt to alert people to the full-scale reality of the situation in Nazi Germany and to challenge their own attitudes. It depends on whether we approach the *Inside Germany Reports* with a pre-conceived notion they are manipulatively apologetic, or whether we approach them with an open mind with no pre-conceived assumptions. The latter approach can be put to the test by critical analysis which evaluates the interpretation for consistency against all the other *Inside Germany Reports*, and consults other sources for understanding of who was compiling the reports and why, and for whom they were intended. The former approach, exemplified by Bankier, renders them of very limited usefulness.

In summary, the *Inside Germany Reports* have potential to inform us usefully and add to our understanding about life in the Third Reich if approached with an open mind that remains alert to their possible shortcomings. Bankier's dismissal of their value renders his argument vulnerable to challenge and undermines his ability to be even-handed in handling his evidence. If we are careful to follow good methodological practice, the shortcomings of the reports can be mitigated and their value maximised. The key element to reiterate is that all sources have something useful to offer and it is not legitimate arbitrarily to dismiss them because they have some limitations.

The third methodological principle advocated in this dissertation states that historians should be prepared to accept the benefits of drawing on the knowledge that other disciplines offer. The list of disciplines which can contribute to historical understanding is very long and I shall discuss only a few of them here. The point that historians must note is that history mostly concerns itself with the human past and historians are not necessarily trained to understand all aspects of human behaviour. As they assemble the fragments of information left by the past, the picture they build relies heavily on their skills of interpretation. Most of the history of the Third Reich is about human beings and how they behaved under extreme circumstances, so it is somewhat puzzling that historians seldom reference sources outside the historical profession that could assist with their interpretation and understanding.

Those who do access other resources sometimes attract a backlash. One example is Christopher Browning's study of the 'ordinary' men who comprised Police Battalion 101,

which draws on Stanley Milgram's famous 'Obedience to Authority' experiments.<sup>152</sup> Burleigh labels Milgram's work as 'highly dubious' but fails to provide any explanation for his conclusion.<sup>153</sup> Bartov's critique of Milgram is more extensive. He makes some interesting observations but his argument is seriously flawed and contains some inelegant red herrings.<sup>154</sup> For example, one of Bartov's chief accusations is that Milgram operated from a position of bias that distorted his findings. This is an allegation which could equally be levelled against Bartov himself, given what we shall discern from close analysis of his study of Klemperer's diaries later in this dissertation. Milgram's work continues to be peer-scrutinized and recent replication of his experiments has produced the same results.<sup>155</sup> Probably the world's best-known social psychological research inside or outside the field, his experiments remain a 'dramatic demonstration of how individuals typically underestimate the power of situational forces when explaining another person's behavior.'<sup>156</sup> Most of the historians commenting on the behaviour of 'ordinary' people in the Third Reich include discussions of situational forces but do so from the perspective of historical analysis, which inevitably falls short of expertly informed understanding of human behaviour.

Milgram's experiment is just one of numerous significant social psychology studies which can be of use for historians of the Third Reich. The power of situational influences and group dynamics, most notably seen in the 'Stanford Prison Experiment', can inform historians as they assess the environment in which Germans lived for twelve years.<sup>157</sup> Investigations of genocide, which include examination of other societies who have experienced mass killings, help us understand the conditions that generate transformations in human behaviour.<sup>158</sup> The role of personal traits and identity in perpetrators, rescuers and bystanders enables us to catch a closer glimpse of what shapes individuals and their reactions to situations.<sup>159</sup> The work of John Darley makes a valuable contribution to

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<sup>152</sup> Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York, 1998), pp. 171-176, and Stanley Milgram, *Obedience to Authority* (New York, 2004).

<sup>153</sup> Burleigh *The Racial State*, p. 304.

<sup>154</sup> 'One can almost see [Milgram] falling in love with his [female] subject.' Bartov, *Disputed Histories*, p.188, also pp. xx, 140,156, 181- 191.

<sup>155</sup> See for example: Dominic Packer, 'Identifying Systematic Disobedience in Milgram's Obedience Experiments', *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 3: 4 (2008), pp. 301-304, and Jerry Burger, 'Replicating Milgram: Would people still obey today?', *American Psychologist*, 64:1 (2009), pp.1-11.

<sup>156</sup> Burger, pp.1-3.

<sup>157</sup> Philip Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect: Understanding How Good People Turn Evil* (New York, 2007).

<sup>158</sup> James Waller, *Becoming Evil: How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Killing* (Oxford, 2002).

<sup>159</sup> Steven Baum, *The Psychology of Genocide: Perpetrators, Bystanders, and Rescuers* (Cambridge, 2008).

understanding conformity. He finds that a person becomes more conforming as his level of fear increases and those who share the same threat will conform more to that group than to those who do not share the threat.<sup>160</sup> This is helpful for understanding the behaviour of both Jewish and non-Jewish Germans in their interactions with each other as both groups were confronted by fear, albeit of differing intensity and significance for their lives.

Darley's most noteworthy contribution to social psychology is now almost forty years old but numerous challenges to his findings have served instead to confirm his results.<sup>161</sup> This work was a range of experiments, conducted by Darley and Bibb Latané, which sought to understand bystanders and their responses to emergencies.<sup>162</sup> Their conclusions were that the popular tendency to attribute bystander inaction to apathy or indifference does not explain much.<sup>163</sup> This work is particularly significant for historians because the phenomenon of being a bystander is much discussed in the secondary sources. Although Darley's 'emergency' situations cannot be said to replicate conditions in the Third Reich, responses to stressful situations are key points of similarity. The conclusions arrived at by Latané and Darley included identifying the decision-making process for those facing something difficult which requires a response. When a person is confronted by a situation, he or she has to notice something wrong, decide whether or not there is an emergency, decide whether it is his personal responsibility to act, and then decide what form of assistance he can offer, before finally deciding how to implement his decision.<sup>164</sup> An intelligent historian will not respond to this information by simply overlaying this type of research onto our understanding of Third Reich life and looking for discrepancies. Instead, it contributes to our ability to analyse, in a thoughtful and qualitative manner, the everyday experiences of Germans under the Nazi regime, finding the points of resonance between social psychology research and the historical record. If the evidence from this research is legitimate, it demonstrates that simplistic explanations of anti-Semitism cannot be the whole story. It also ensures that we have the necessary background to be able to assess more fully the dimensions of responses to key events such as the 1933 boycott of Jewish

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<sup>160</sup> John Darley, 'Fear and social comparison as determinants of conformity behaviour', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 4:1 (1966), pp. 73-78.

<sup>161</sup> Michael Stohl, 'Outside of a Small Circle of Friends: States, Genocide, Mass Killing and the Role of Bystanders', *Journal of Peace Research*, 24:2 (1987), p. 159.

<sup>162</sup> Bibb Latané and John Darley, *The Unresponsive Bystander: Why doesn't he help?* (New York, 1970).

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 31-36.

businesses or the terrors of *Reichskristallnacht*, or to understand better what happened when Jewish Germans and non-Jewish Germans encountered each other.

Sometimes Nazi Germany is the specific focus of studies originating from other disciplines. For example, historians can benefit from the insights of political science concerning the structures of power and the behaviour of those who wield it, for example, investigation of another type of ‘bystander’: those observing Germany from the outside.<sup>165</sup> Sociological research by Samuel and Pearl Oliner has much to inform us about rescuers of Jewish people and the background to their altruistic behaviours.<sup>166</sup> Here, historians can begin to weigh whether altruistic actions toward Jewish people were reasonable expectations for all Germans or just for a select few who conformed to specific criteria.

The field of educational research can also contribute significantly to our understanding of qualitative and quantitative research.<sup>167</sup> Along with other social sciences, educational research models good practice for clear and useful explanations of method which can be instructional for historians. The contributions of linguistic and literary studies are useful for creating awareness of nuances in primary source text and understanding how to interpret narrative.<sup>168</sup> The significant issue of silence, already discussed in this chapter, is addressed from within the field of sociology. Eviatar Zerubavel tells us that most conspiracies of silence are generated by fear or embarrassment.<sup>169</sup> Historians need to be sure they understand these concepts before they draw their own conclusions on the meaning of silence when they encounter it in their research.

Shortcomings in method can be drawn to our attention by other disciplines. For example, public opinion research identifies a problem that historians need to address:

A serious gap between historiographic theory and practice has resulted [from the recent interest of historians in mass behaviour]; the traditional rules of historical method were not

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<sup>165</sup> Michael Stohl, ‘Outside of a Small Circle of Friends: States, Genocide, Mass Killing and the Role of Bystanders’, *Journal of Peace Research*, 24:2 (1987).

<sup>166</sup> Samuel and Pearl Oliner, *The Altruistic Personality: Rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe* (New York, 1988).

<sup>167</sup> For two examples: Nahid Golafshani, ‘Understanding Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research’, *The Qualitative Report*, 8:4 (2003), pp. 597-607, and Yvonna Lincoln, ‘Emerging Criteria for Quality in Qualitative and Interpretive Research’, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 1:3 (1995), pp. 275-289.

<sup>168</sup> For example, Wolfgang Mieder, “‘In lingua veritas’ Proverbial Rhetoric in Victor Klemperer’s Diaries of the Nazi Years (1933-1945)”, *Western Folklore*, 59:1 (2000), pp. 1-31 and Wallace Martin, *Recent Theories of Narrative* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1986).

<sup>169</sup> Eviatar Zerubavel, *The Elephant in the Room: Silence and Denial in Everyday Life* (Oxford, 2006), p. 6. This book should be considered merely an introduction to a very complex topic.

devised by scholars dealing with mass behavior and have not been amended in any systematic form by later scholars concerned with such phenomena. It follows, therefore, that historical method, as developed to date, can have only limited value as a guide to researchers trying to study public opinion in a mass society.<sup>170</sup>

A deficiency in the field of mass communication studies (already mentioned in this chapter) highlights for us the importance of not casually ascribing undue influence from newspapers or other media. We simply do not possess enough information yet to know either way what impact the media actually had on the attitudes of people.

The point of accessing information from other disciplines is not to become dependent on them for proving or disproving our historical arguments but to provide a thorough grounding which serves to benefit our understanding of the elements that comprise the human experience. A testament to the benefits of disciplines working together can be seen in the outcomes of a 1989 conference held in Poland to explore the concept of altruism. Historians, psychologists, social psychologists, sociologists, philosophers, educators, and social welfare representatives pooled their resources to gain new insights, finding that individual disciplines alone were inadequate to explain all the dimensions involved. Mutual enrichment and cohesion were the ultimate benefits of collaboration.<sup>171</sup> It seems logical to assume that if the discipline of history stands separate from connection or interaction with other disciplines, it surely can only present an unnecessarily constricted point of view.

### **The historians in summary**

In this chapter, we have identified three problems in the way that historians use their evidence. Sometimes they make questionable decisions in terms of selecting evidence for analysis, frequently they over-generalise and/or distort their evidence in order to make it fit a pre-conceived theory, and they largely fail to make creative use of the evidence that can be supplied by other disciplines. One possible reason for these problems may be that where historians are concerned with the 'ordinary' people they are mostly interested to examine the level of support for the Hitler regime or how much they knew about what was happening to the Jews, particularly in regard to deportations.<sup>172</sup> The study of people's

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<sup>170</sup> Benson, 'Past Public Opinion', p. 528. Note that Lee Benson is a historian who in this case was operating within the sphere of public opinion research.

<sup>171</sup> Pearl Oliner et al, *Embracing the Other: Philosophical, Psychological, and Historical Perspectives on Altruism* (New York, 1995) pp. 6-9.

<sup>172</sup> These two points of focus are easily ascertained by surveying summaries provided on the covers of social histories about the Third Reich.



attitudes toward their Jewish compatriots has, for the most part, been confined to sections within the larger, more broadly-based general studies. The decisions historians make about how the non-Jewish population behaved are usually supplementary to conclusions drawn about the level of support and knowledge of deportations. In other words, if it can be shown that the people largely supported the regime and it can be demonstrated that they knew what was happening to the Jews, historians then deduce that they were indifferent to or endorsed the fate of the Jewish people. They substantiate these theories by drawing on examples from eyewitness accounts which tell what happened when ‘Aryans’ encountered Jews. They use these anecdotal examples, however, to add emphasis to an argument without careful analysing how representative or typical they are.

My argument is that even if historians claim that ‘ordinary’ Germans supported the regime and had knowledge of the plight of the outcasts this does not necessarily say anything about the attitudes and behaviours of non-Jewish Germans toward the Jewish people. Proving one point does not necessarily prove another. Relationships were very complex and there can be no simple description of attitudes or behaviours in general.<sup>173</sup> When it comes to attitudes, one Sopade report comments: ‘Not only does public opinion no longer exist, there is no longer even such a thing as group opinion.’<sup>174</sup> A single indicator of this complexity can be seen in Victor Klemperer’s relationship with the grocer Vogel, who is mentioned many times in the 1933-1945 diaries as a purveyor of gossip, information detrimental to the regime, provisions, encouragement and general support for Klemperer during dark days. Somewhat startlingly, he ultimately emerges as a member of the Nazi Party.<sup>175</sup> Historians have not yet reached a place where justifiably they can claim to understand the attitudes of the ‘ordinary’ German people toward Jewish Germans.

The question of more importance to this present study is: have historians been conscientious in making the best possible use of the evidence they have? If they are correct that the evidence can only supply us with impressionistic data, then it begs the question of why do they persist in making sweeping and confident claims about people’s attitudes?

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<sup>173</sup> See Mark Roseman, *The Past in Hiding: Memory and survival in Nazi Germany* (London, 2000), p. 12.

<sup>174</sup> Ayçoberry, p. 90.

<sup>175</sup> 29 June 1945, 6 September 1945. Victor Klemperer, *I Will Bear Witness: A Diary of the Nazi Years 1942-1945* (New York, 2001), pp. 16, 48-49. Vogel exemplifies the ‘grey areas’ where people apparently collaborated and resisted at the same time, which do not fit with historians’ preferences for neat categories of behaviour as described by Kushner (footnote 31). See Bob Moore, *Resistance in Western Europe* (Oxford, 2000), p. 10.

The responsibility of the historian is to ensure he or she is in possession of sufficient reliable data, not only to be able appropriately to support any assertions, but also to locate alternate explanations or re-examine the issue from different angles. It can be tempting to extrapolate where the evidence is flimsy, but it is not excusable – particularly if there are other sources of information which have the ability to provide firmer foundations for hypotheses. This leads to another question. Until this point, we have mostly looked at how historians handle evidence from official sources. If we examine their use of personal narratives, can we discover if they deal with this type of source any better? The remaining two chapters investigate what personal testimony sources can tell us and how historians handle them.

## Chapter Two

### Personal Narratives

Personal narratives, in the form of diaries and memoirs written by Jewish people, constitute a much larger body of evidence than is usually recognised. Writing in 1996, Walter Laqueur notes about 120 published diaries written by Jews in occupied Europe with 300-400 unpublished or fragmentary diaries. He believes there are more.<sup>1</sup> According to Laqueur, just three men – Victor Klemperer, Willy Cohn and Richard Koch – left a ‘huge body’ of evidence.<sup>2</sup> More recently, Alexandra Garbarini has discovered that hundreds of diaries remain unexplored and unpublished in a number of archives. Her implication is that there may be more still to uncover because the rate of diary-writing during the Nazi years increased as external pressures from the regime forced people to turn inward.<sup>3</sup> The memoirs stored away in archives around the world run into the thousands. Raul Hilberg was informed that survivor testimonies were ‘getting out of hand’ already by the late 1950s; the 18,000 accounts identified at that time has grown much larger since.<sup>4</sup> Even without adding other types of personal testimony such as oral histories, interviews, or surveys, personal testimony literature could well be the single largest body of evidence available. If we separate out the many which would have been written by people in occupied Europe there still is much unexplored material which could give us information about relationships among the ordinary people of Germany.

Even though some scholars believe these types of sources are too fragmentary to be useful, projects such as the *Oneg Shabbes* underground archives have set precedents. According to Simone Gigliotti, these diaries from the Warsaw ghetto occupy a privileged status among scholars because of their contemporaneously ‘authentic and visceral accounts’.<sup>5</sup> Although the *Oneg Shabbes* accounts were purposively assembled as a testimony for the

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<sup>1</sup> Walter Laqueur, ‘Three Witnesses: The Legacy of Viktor Klemperer, Willy Cohn, and Richard Koch’, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 10:3 (1996), pp. 253, 261.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 265.

<sup>3</sup> Alexandra Garbarini, *Numbered Days: Diaries and the Holocaust* (New Haven, 2006), pp. xi, 2-3.

However, note that the ability of diaries to reveal the information being sought will vary. For example, while Klemperer’s diaries are of extensive value in addressing the questions of attitudes among the people, Jochen Klepper’s diary is more focussed on his inner life: his thoughts, emotions and spirituality so is less informative than Klemperer on the same issues.

<sup>4</sup> Raul Hilberg, ‘I Was Not There’, in *Writing and the Holocaust*, ed. Berel Lang (New York, 1988), p. 18.

<sup>5</sup> Simone Gigliotti, ‘Numbered Days: Diaries and the Holocaust’, *American Historical Review*, 112:5 (2007), p. 1498.

outside world, they contain no essential differences from those written by Jews in Germany, particularly if we compare them with similar accounts according to the principle of ‘parallel biographies’ recommended by Ayçoberry.<sup>6</sup> Diaries from Germany have not been gathered together into an organised collection but their value remains as relevant as those from Warsaw.

## Historians and personal narratives

Historians’ attitudes toward personal narratives vary. Of the eleven historians discussed in Chapter One (Bankier, Bartov, Burleigh, Friedländer, Gellately, Heim, Johnson, Kaplan, Kershaw, Kulka, and Wildt), just four make extensive use of them as sources.<sup>7</sup> The only historian among the eleven who utilises a wide range of data both official and personal is Saul Friedländer. He is enthusiastic about the value of personal testimonies and claims ‘centre stage’ for diaries in his two volume work on the Holocaust. He writes that ‘the only concrete history that can be retrieved remains that carried by personal stories.’<sup>8</sup>

For the most part, however, this large pool of evidence has not yet been fully utilised, despite the huge historical interest in Nazi Germany and the Holocaust. The most notable gap in the historiography of the Third Reich is arguably the failure of historians to make thorough use of the accounts provided by eyewitnesses whose experiences are recorded in diaries, memoirs, oral histories, interviews, or surveys.<sup>9</sup> Even the few historians who are enthusiastic about personal narratives have rarely done anything more sophisticated with them than to use excerpts to illustrate or emphasise a point. Unfortunately, evidence drawn from personal narratives is not always applied in ways that are methodologically sound.

At this point, my critique of the use of personal narratives by historians is based on the fourth of the methodological principles that I outlined in my introduction, namely, that the

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<sup>6</sup> Ayçoberry, p. 7. See also Rita Horváth, ‘On Comparing Jewish Survivors’ Testimonies taken by the National Relief Committee for Deportees in Hungary and Other Large-Scale Historical-Memorial Projects of She’erit Hapletah in the Immediate Aftermath of the Holocaust (1945-1948)’, *Yad Vashem* (2004), [http://www1.yadvashem.org/about\\_yad/departments/institute/Dr\\_Rita.html](http://www1.yadvashem.org/about_yad/departments/institute/Dr_Rita.html).

<sup>7</sup> These four are Heim, Bartov, Kaplan and Friedländer. Note that Bartov and Heim appear here only because they have written monographs specifically focused on Klemperer’s diaries.

<sup>8</sup> Friedländer, *Years of Persecution*, p. 5, and *The Years of Extermination* (New York, 2007), pp. xxv, 63.

<sup>9</sup> Recently there has been some growth in the number of publications which make wider use of personal narratives, for example: Peter Fritzche, *Life and Death in the Third Reich* (Cambridge, Mass., 2008). However, the emphasis in this dissertation is on the best use of personal narratives to obtain maximum value from them. Even the recent works still rely on the historians’ impressionistic responses to personal narratives.

evidence from sources generated by the group under scrutiny is just as valuable as the evidence generated by groups not under scrutiny. Where the topic concerns relations between Jewish and non-Jewish Germans in the Third Reich, this means the personal testimonies generated by the ‘ordinary’ people (the group under scrutiny) should be considered just as valuable, or even more valuable, as the reports compiled by the Nazi regime or Sopade (the group not under scrutiny). The personal narratives I reference from this point forward were chosen because they are commonly quoted by the historians who do use testimonial evidence in some manner as they argue their viewpoints.

### **Limited or non-use of personal narratives**

Some historians share Friedländer’s enthusiasm for personal narratives but they demonstrate a mysterious failure actually to utilise them. In quoting from two diaries, Michael Burleigh writes: ‘Sometimes their insights and sensibility are of a higher order than those of historians and other contemporary commentators whose investment is often in some methodological dogma or theory rather than in the spirit of those times.’<sup>10</sup> Yet his comprehensive bibliography, which lists hundreds of titles, contains a mere handful of personal narratives. His chapter which examines the relationships between German Jews and their neighbours is of the most interest to this present study. It contains 187 footnotes, of which only thirty-one (16.6 percent) reference personal narratives (other than Nazi sources such as Goebbels’ diaries) from a total of just eight sources.<sup>11</sup> Robert Gellately also makes very little use of eyewitness accounts from diaries or memoirs, footnoting only a small number of references to such testimonies. In his study of how Germans backed Hitler, the bibliography listing his key sources acknowledges just one primary source personal narrative – Victor Klemperer’s diary.<sup>12</sup> Yet this is a book whose jacket cover emphasises that it is about the ‘ordinary’ people. It seems extraordinary that their voices so rarely speak.

Other historians, such as Kulka, Hilberg or Kershaw, are reluctant to use personal narratives in more than a limited way. They argue that such sources are problematic and these historians invariably demonstrate that they believe official documents are of greater

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<sup>10</sup> Michael Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History* (London, 2000), p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> Burleigh, *Third Reich*, pp. 281-342 and 847-856.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Gellately, *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 339-343.

importance.<sup>13</sup> Bartov notes that historians find it easier to write about perpetrators because they can refer to official documentation. Study of victims is less preferred because the sources which inform us about victims – diaries, memoirs, letters or interviews – are more subjective and less reliable.<sup>14</sup> Because Kulka doubts the reliability of personal narratives, he says they can neither affirm nor refute historians' interpretations of attitudes toward Jews.<sup>15</sup> Raul Hilberg believes diaries lose contextual meaning because 'unanchored fragments' of detail float in the text.<sup>16</sup> Kershaw also sits in the camp of those who find the benefits of personal narratives limited. He believes they are affected by self-censorship: 'Direct, authentic expressions of opinion in their original form are few and far between. In the pervading climate of fear and repression, frank political comment in diaries, papers, and letters of private individuals was naturally sparse.'<sup>17</sup>

Though Bartov and his colleagues are certainly correct to note that personal narratives are problematic as historical sources, it is striking that they fail to mention that the official sources that they prefer to use are equally or even more problematic. It may be true, as Kershaw claims, that the writers of letters and diaries were restrained by a degree of 'self-censorship'. But this is equally true of the authors of official reports and even truer of the *vox populi* reported in Nazi *Lageberichte* and *Stimmungsberichte*.

Hilberg, in particular, is dismissive of personal narratives and he assembles a long list of reservations about the value of such material: important details are left non-specific because of caution in the face of risk, rumours may or may not be true, and facts pertinent to a historian may be omitted because the witness deems them unimportant.<sup>18</sup> Though some of his qualms are valid, Hilberg's overall conclusion – that the evidence of eyewitnesses is unreliable – can be challenged. There are numerous personal narratives in existence which contain many specific details that were recorded with full knowledge of

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<sup>13</sup> This attitude could be rooted in the origins of historical practice, when history concerned itself more with the structures of power and key figures such as von Ranke occupied their thoughts with political and ecclesiastical history. But foundational historiography did not account for the development of social history and the study of public opinion, which is the necessary basis for examining relations between Jews and non-Jews in Nazi Germany.

<sup>14</sup> Omer Bartov, *Germany's War and the Holocaust: Disputed Histories* (Ithaca, N.Y., 2003), p.196.

<sup>15</sup> Otto Dov Kulka, 'The German Population and the Jews: State of Research and New Perspectives' in *Probing the Depths of German Antisemitism*, ed. D. Bankier (New York, 2000), p. 279.

<sup>16</sup> Raul Hilberg, *Sources of Holocaust Research: An Analysis* (Chicago, 2001), pp. 164-165.

<sup>17</sup> Ian Kershaw, *Popular Opinion and Political Dissent in the Third Reich: Bavaria 1933-1945* (Oxford, 1983), p. 6.

<sup>18</sup> Hilberg, *Holocaust Research*, pp. 161-165.

the enormous risks, just some of which are discussed in this dissertation.<sup>19</sup> These authors tended to reduce the level of risk by hiding or smuggling documents, rather than falsifying or omitting crucial text.<sup>20</sup> Instead of omissions, they often employed substitutions for an individual or location while retaining the details of what actually happened.

Hilberg also finds survivor testimonies to be less meaningful or even inauthentic because they tend to follow archetypal patterns.<sup>21</sup> Even if he is correct about archetypes in the storytelling, this does not necessarily render the stories meaningless. Given the fact that Jewish people living in Nazi Germany were collectively persecuted, and thereby endured many common experiences, it is hardly surprising that there are patterns in their testimony. A further concern expressed by Hilberg is that survivors are not representative – they are an elite group who survived because they or their circumstances contained specific elements which gave them a greater chance of surviving. Furthermore, they do not represent all survivors as many chose not to speak out for specific reasons and their accounts are selective.<sup>22</sup> In fact, however, those who survived the Holocaust often did so for reasons that were fortuitous or random. Jewish people from all walks of life and all circumstances perished while others with the same attributes did not. It was not necessarily the young, the brave, the perspicacious, or the rich who survived – it was the fortunate.

Not only does Hilberg discount the value of diaries and memoirs, he also has little confidence in oral histories. This type of evidence, he claims, is compromised by the influence of the questioner, the interviewee's conception of how their evidence will be used, abridged statements and problems of chronology.<sup>23</sup> He also believes that verbatim quotes equate to novelization.<sup>24</sup> His list of worries also includes the fact that information can be concealed, forgotten, or obscured by the inability of the interviewee to express it.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Victor Klemperer, Frederick Reck, Ruth Andreas-Friedrich, Jochen Klepper, Missie Vassiltchikoff or Else Behrend-Rosenfeld are some of the writers who clearly were prepared to risk being specific with details.

<sup>20</sup> For example, Klemperer's wife smuggled his diaries, a few pages at a time, into the safe-keeping of Annemarie Köhler, Frederick Reck hid his diary in the woods of his estate.

<sup>21</sup> Hilberg, 'I Was Not There', pp.18-19, and *Holocaust Research*, p. 67. See also Theodore Ziolkowski, 'Versions of Holocaust', *Sewanee Review*, LXXXVII (1979), pp. 680-681, for an expansion on the idea of archetypal survivor literature.

<sup>22</sup> Hilberg, *Holocaust Research*, pp. 48-49.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 65-66.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 70-71.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 166-167. In regard to these problems, the works of Lawrence Langer are of particular use, especially (for this dissertation): Lawrence Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory* (New Haven, 1991). Other studies referenced for this dissertation were Hilberg, Langer, and Friedländer in *Writing and the Holocaust*, ed. Berel Lang (New York, 1988); essays by Browning, White, Funkenstein and LaCapra

Although Hilberg's concerns about the reliability of oral testimony are well-founded, they are matched by equivalent problems in other sources. But many of the problems identified by Hilberg can be at least partially addressed by using oral testimonies, diaries and memoirs in conjunction with a variety of other sources. In dismissing personal narratives as useful sources, Hilberg gives greater voice to the perpetrators, to the cost of the voices of the victims.

Another prominent historian who has expressed doubts about the value of certain types of personal narrative is David Bankier. According to Bankier, the post-war recollections provided by Jewish survivors have limited value due to discrepancies and contradictions caused by memory lapses and omissions.<sup>26</sup> They also contain confusions and generalizations caused by conscious or sub-conscious 'touching up' of the past. He writes: 'We must bear in mind the warning of experts in the field of oral history, that memory is not a reproduction of reality but rather a symbolic mediation and elaboration of meaning with imagination guiding the perception of reality.'<sup>27</sup> For Bankier, this means that the recollections of survivors should be confined to illustrating or adding colour to accounts based on less subjective sources (by which presumably he means his preferred regime-generated reports). Although other historians examined for the purposes of this study do not explicitly discuss their views with regard to personal narratives, we can infer from their practice that they broadly agree with Bankier. Most historians, where they use personal narratives at all, do so purely to reinforce a point or to add atmosphere.

Bankier's dismissal of these memoirs raises the issue of validity in personal recollections made after the passage of time. Weber relates how oral or auto/biographical accounts have been historically perceived as unreliable because they were considered 'intentional, selective, reflective, retrospective and produced light years away from the actual event' and therefore deserving of exclusion from academic history.<sup>28</sup> It is certainly true that, when

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in *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the Final Solution*, ed. Saul Friedländer (Cambridge, Mass., 1992); James E. Young, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation* (Bloomington, Ind., 1988); Wolfgang Weber, "Mass of Trash" or "Veins of Gold"? *An Investigative Report on the Relationship Between Oral History and Archives* (Regensburg, 2000); and Wallace Martin, *Recent Theories of Narrative* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1986).

<sup>26</sup> David Bankier, *The Germans and the Final Solution: Public Opinion under Nazism* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 118-119. Bankier does not specifically say to which post-war recollections he is referring but his text implies that he means post-war oral histories in general.

<sup>27</sup> Bankier, *Germans*, p. 118.

<sup>28</sup> Weber, "Mass of Trash", pp. 26-28.



an eyewitness constructs an account of an event, the very process of doing so is affected by the socio-cultural, historical and psychological or emotional factors that exist as he or she reconstructs and externalizes the account. All accounts must be considered partial and incomplete.<sup>29</sup> Psychologist Daniel Schacter explains what this leaves us with: ‘We do not store judgment-free snapshots of our past experiences but rather hold on to the meaning, sense, and emotions these experiences provided us.’<sup>30</sup> However, personal narratives also have important advantages over the official documents that Bankier, Hilberg and others deem to be more reliable.<sup>31</sup> As Weber points out, official records cannot answer the qualitative questions of history, such as motives or reasons for past human behaviour. In this area, he finds that oral histories are indeed useful and he suggests that oral history and documentary history should be ‘symbiotic partners of the same discipline.’<sup>32</sup>

Another category of personal narratives of which Bankier is suspicious comprises interviews with German-Jewish exiles that were recorded whilst the Nazi regime was still in power. Even though this evidence was recorded soon after the event, and therefore not degraded by the vagaries of memory over time, it should still – according to Bankier – be ‘taken with a grain of salt.’<sup>33</sup> For example, Jewish émigrés to Britain were interviewed by Foreign Office officials about their experiences in, and impressions of, Nazi Germany. It sometimes happened that such émigrés recounted incidents where non-Jewish Germans had either expressed hostility to the anti-Semitic policies of the regime, or demonstrated kindness towards individual Jews. For two reasons, Bankier discounts such testimony. Firstly, he argues that criticisms of the regime voiced by non-Jewish Germans to Jewish Germans were less meaningful because of the unlikelihood the complainants would be denounced. This rather baffling point implies that, in Bankier’s view, Germans were more likely to express a true opinion when they feared denunciation than when they did not.<sup>34</sup> Bankier’s second reason for discounting these interviews is that those who did express criticism were not necessarily representative of majority opinion. Immediately before his ‘grain of salt’ comment, Bankier’s text reads:

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<sup>29</sup> Yvonna Lincoln, ‘Emerging Criteria for Quality in Qualitative and Interpretive Research’, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 1:3 (1995), p. 280. This principle applies equally to Jewish eyewitnesses recounting their experiences long after the event and regime agents compiling reports for their superiors.

<sup>30</sup> Daniel Schacter, *Searching for Memory: the Brain, the Mind, and the Past* (New York, 1996), p. 5.

<sup>31</sup> Note that official regime reports were also ‘intentional, selective, reflective, retrospective’ material.

<sup>32</sup> Weber, “*Mass of Trash*”, pp. 30-31.

<sup>33</sup> Bankier, *Germans*, p. 119.

<sup>34</sup> Note the puzzling discrepancy where Bankier accepts the validity of complaints about the regime as described in SD reports, but cannot accept them in eyewitness testimony.

According to a third witness . . . the public attitude was sometimes hostile but mostly neutral and reserved. There had been individual expressions of sympathy, such as a Jewish family finding fruit, pastry and chocolate at the door of its flat. There were still friendly relations between Jews and non-Jews in many buildings.<sup>35</sup>

**Bankier does not deny the evidence outright but his implication is that it is less than credible and certainly is not representative.**

What is particularly troubling about Bankier's discussion of personal narratives is that, despite the fact that he is very interested in the beliefs and behaviour of 'ordinary' people, he seems eager to dismiss the value of their voices. Instead of listening to the *vox populi* directly, he is more inclined to believe the assessment of Nazi officials concerning the attitudes of ordinary people. He privileges what is essentially second-hand testimony over a first-hand testimony. In taking a hierarchical approach to sources, Bankier opens himself to questions of why he does so. He clearly prefers one type of account to another, but he does not acknowledge that the cautions associated with those he designates unreliable apply equally or to an even greater extent to his preferred sources. He leaves himself exposed to accusations of discarding valuable information because it does not fit with his particular viewpoint. He is not alone, however, in taking uneven or unjustified approaches to sources. This attitude amongst historians demonstrates that they are not prepared to seriously consider that sources generated by the group under scrutiny are just as valuable as the reports compiled by the Nazi regime or Sopade.

### **Misuse of evidence from personal narratives**

The misuse of evidence from personal narratives can take several forms. As we saw in Chapter One, evidence can be misrepresented when historians over-generalise or make claims based on insufficient data. For example, Marion Kaplan makes sweeping claims about what happened at funerals when she writes: 'Funerals were a time and place where small-town meanness was particularly conspicuous, since funerals had previously been a time of general neighbourliness, sympathy and piety.'<sup>36</sup> She records two incidents, taken from memoirs, of Jews being harassed and concludes: 'By the end of 1938, harassment at Jewish funerals had become widespread. Small groups of Germans would shout antisemitic insults at mourners gathered at the cemetery, whether in cities, like Leipzig, or in small

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<sup>35</sup> Bankier, *Germans*, p. 119.

<sup>36</sup> Marion Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (Oxford, 1998), p. 38.

villages.<sup>37</sup> Her endnotes indicate that her source material is not substantially larger than the two examples she provides in the text.<sup>38</sup> It is problematic for Kaplan to use a term such as 'widespread' on the basis of two examples. This is not to say that her assertion is incorrect; perhaps harassment at Jewish funerals *was* widespread. But there is a mismatch between her statement and the evidence that she supplies to support it. In effect, she asks the readers to take it on trust that the incidents to which she refers were typical.

It is worth noting, however, that just as Kaplan has plucked examples from personal narratives to illustrate her assertion that Jewish funerals were harassed, it is also possible to find numerous counter-examples. In his diaries Klemperer describes, at length and in detail, eleven Jewish funerals that he attended; in none does he mention any kind of harassment.<sup>39</sup> Hans Winterfeldt, a survivor of Auschwitz, wrote about his experiences in Lippehne: 'The only excursion we could take without fear was to the Jewish cemetery.'<sup>40</sup> Kaplan's assertion can thus be challenged by an equal or larger number of perfectly appropriate contrary examples. Even though Kaplan favours the use of personal testimonies, she appears to pick and choose illustrations to demonstrate her argument without any attempt to show that they are typical or indicative of general patterns.

The problem of imposing pre-existing theories on the evidence also occurs when historians reference personal narratives. They can either claim that the evidence says something other than what it really says, or they can imply it is somehow misleading because it does not fit with their general argument. Eyewitness accounts recorded as personal narratives appear to be particularly vulnerable to this sort of misuse. While historians only rarely label sources as completely false, they do betray their prejudices toward some by employing expressions which in effect invalidate the evidence or influence the reader. Y. Michal Bodemann provides an example of this phenomenon when he avowedly sets out to demonstrate that Germans after World War II sought to evade responsibility for the crimes that the Nazis

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 38. For one of her two examples, Kaplan fails to note the disapproving reactions of non-Jewish onlookers to an anti-Semitic comment about a Jewish death, which, if included, might have undermined her theme of harassment.

<sup>38</sup> Kaplan, *Dignity and Despair*, p. 243.

<sup>39</sup> 20 July 1933, 18 July 1940, 19 June 1942, 5 July 1942, 10 August 1942, 18 September 1942, 3 January 1943, 18 April 1943, 3 May 1943 (two funerals), 9 May 1943. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, pp. 24, 333, and Victor Klemperer, *I Will Bear Witness: A Diary of the Nazi Years 1942-1945* (New York, 2001), pp. 81-82, 93-94, 118-119, 147, 185, 215, 223-224, 226-227.

<sup>40</sup> Hans Winterfeldt in Margarete Limberg and Hubert Rübsaat (eds.), *Germans No More: Accounts of Jewish Everyday Life 1933-1938* (New York, 2006), p. 100.

had perpetrated in their name. Bodemann uses the narrative of Else Behrend-Rosenfeld, which she wrote during the regime, as an example of how he believes the Shoah was reduced to 'its mere contours'.<sup>41</sup> He claims that she blurred the boundaries between Jewish and non-Jewish Germans, and between victims and perpetrators. Behrend-Rosenfeld's testimony is notable because she stresses the many kindnesses that were shown by non-Jews to herself and other Jewish people during the war years.<sup>42</sup> She provides a detailed account of her experiences of relations between Jewish and non-Jewish Germans which is useful to compare with other testimonies. According to Marita Krauss, Behrend-Rosenfeld's purpose in writing was to record her experiences of suffering, but without bitterness.<sup>43</sup> Bodemann, however, claims that she 'de-authenticates' Jews by re-shaping them into middle-class, bourgeois Germans for the comfort of her readers. It is convenient for Bodemann's case if Behrend-Rosenfeld's testimony can be ruled tainted because it does not fit his perception of how it should be framed in light of the Shoah. For him, Behrend-Rosenfeld's descriptions of interactions between Jewish people and non-Jews have no intrinsic meaning unless they convey the full weight of Jewish 'otherness' and suffering. Meaning is assigned to behaviour, not on the basis of how the eyewitness represents her experiences, but on how well it fits Bodemann's interpretation of the Shoah.

Bodemann is by no means the only example of a historian who tries to cast doubt on the reliability of personal testimony when it conflicts with a pre-conceived theory. For example, we have already seen how Bankier downgrades the value of testimony that conflicts with his general assertions about how non-Jewish Germans mostly consented to Nazi persecution, and that support offered to Jews was infrequent.<sup>44</sup> A further example is provided by Daniel Johnson. He discusses Jochen Klepper, whose diaries were used as evidence in the Eichmann trial. Klepper recorded his views that the people did not support Hitler's anti-Semitism or that Nazi measures such as *Reichskristallnacht* alienated the population. Johnson's response to these beliefs is that Klepper was 'in denial'.<sup>45</sup> Moreover,

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<sup>41</sup> Y. Michal Bodemann, 'Eclipse of Memory: German Representations of Auschwitz in the Early Postwar Period', *New German Critique*, 75 (1998), pp. 63, 68.

<sup>42</sup> Else Behrend-Rosenfeld, *Ich stand nicht allein: Leben einer Jüdin in Deutschland 1933 bis 1944* (Munich, 1988). Behrend-Rosenfeld traces her personal odyssey in diary/letter form as she comes to terms with her transformation from her understanding of herself as fully German to being an outcast Jew. As the regime progresses she develops the courage and strength to assist other Jews before going into hiding herself.

<sup>43</sup> Marita Krauss, 'Nachwort' in Else Behrend-Rosenfeld, *Ich stand nicht allein: Leben einer Jüdin in Deutschland 1933 bis 1944* (Munich, 1988), p. 270.

<sup>44</sup> Bankier, *Germans*, p. 118.

<sup>45</sup> Daniel Johnson, 'What Victor Klemperer Saw', *Commentary*, 109: 6 (2000), p. 48.

Susanne Heim asserts that Klemperer was plain mistaken in the times when he felt particles of hope in response to the behaviours of non-Jews towards him.<sup>46</sup> In each of these examples, the historian has sought to cast doubt on the reliability of witnesses who provide testimony that contradicts his or her analysis.

A further misuse of personal narratives occurs when the assertions made by historians do not match the evidence they provide. An example of this discrepancy appears in the editors' introduction to a section in the Limberg and Rübsaat memoirs.<sup>47</sup> In the segment entitled 'The First Victims: Doctors and Lawyers', the editors declare:

Those [doctors] who still managed to practice were driven to ruin in other ways. Their non-Jewish patients abandoned them one by one. Some remained loyal for a time and came, if necessary, under cover of darkness . . . there were also patients who attempted to exploit the doctors' situation by employing blackmail and false accusations.<sup>48</sup>

According to the editors, non-Jewish patients thus actively colluded with the regime to hound Jewish doctors out of business. Two testimonies from doctors, chosen by Limberg and Rübsaat as representative, follow the introduction. If these testimonies are scrutinized closely, their statements about how doctors fared at the hands of their patients are not consistent with the evidence presented.

Doctor Henriette Necheles-Magnus describes mixed responses to the regime among her medical colleagues and the despicable behaviour of the non-Jewish doctor who appropriated her practice after she was forced to give it up.<sup>49</sup> But, most notably, the general substance of her account published in Limberg concerns the loyalty of her patients. She provides nine specific examples of loyalty and does not mention that she felt abandoned by any patients. The second account, from Arthur Samuel, consists solely of three stories where he found himself at risk because of his status as a Jew.<sup>50</sup> The first occurred in 1928, before the Nazis came to power, and concerns a legal difficulty over a drug-addicted patient. In the second, he narrowly avoids prosecution based on false accusations.

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<sup>46</sup> Susanne Heim, 'The German-Jewish Relationship in the Diaries of Victor Klemperer' in *Probing the Depths of German Antisemitism*, ed. D. Bankier (New York, 2000), pp. 316, 324.

<sup>47</sup> Margarete Limberg and Hubert Rübsaat (eds.), *Germans No More: Accounts of Jewish Everyday Life 1933-1938* (New York, 2006). These memoirs were selected from the 'Harvard collection' of essays written by German émigrés while the regime was still in power. The background to this collection is discussed later in this chapter.

<sup>48</sup> Limberg, p. 18.

<sup>49</sup> Henriette Necheles-Magnus in Limberg, pp. 19-21. For further secondary source information about how Jewish doctors were treated, see Michael Kater, *Doctors under Hitler* (Chapel Hill, 1989), pp. 184-185.

<sup>50</sup> Arthur Samuel in Limberg, pp. 22-24.

Samuel's testimony reveals that these accusations were motivated not by anti-Semitism, but by the desire of a non-Jewish family to protect their reputation and business. In both of these stories, his problems peak when he becomes entangled with the legal authorities. The third concerns a grateful and previously loyal patient who foolishly ('the stupid goose') believed a non-Jewish doctor who claimed that Jewish doctors poisoned their patients. While it is clear that Doctor Samuel's difficulties are related to his being Jewish, the circumstances and motivations of the other protagonists are clearly more complex than simple anti-Semitism. It is of course possible that the essays not chosen for inclusion in the Limberg collection may have contained multiple stories of abandonment and exploitation by the 'ordinary' people. But the evidence that the editors provide, which they claim to be representative of all the essays submitted, does not fully support their summary of the situation.

The narratives selected by Limberg and Rübsaat for publication in their book were chosen from a larger collection kept at Harvard University. There were a total of twenty-four essays written by doctors or dentists in the complete collection. It would be a relatively straightforward process systematically to analyse them to assess how representative the two chosen by Limberg and Rübsaat were in describing the loyalties of patients.<sup>51</sup> The problem these editors have is that they did not interrogate the text, checking it against their conclusions, to ensure that their statements accurately reflected what was in the testimonies.

As we have seen, some historians question the reliability of personal testimony when it contradicts their line of argument. But they can also commit the opposite methodological sin by using personal testimony that is useful to their case without informing the reader that there are serious problems with its reliability. Examples of this problem are provided by historians who quote the diaries of Bella Fromm, a German socialite and gossip columnist who was Jewish.<sup>52</sup> Fromm ostensibly wrote a diary while mixing freely with the Nazi elite. Much of her evidence, however, can be proven to be second-hand and compiled

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<sup>51</sup> Harry Lieberman comments on the general tenor of the essays in the complete collection: 'the doctors have more to say [than anything] about day-to-day personal relationships, which they observed at close range in private practices, hospitals and clinics.' Harry Lieberman and Dorothee Schneider, "'My Life in Germany before and after January 30, 1933': A Guide to a Manuscript Collection at Houghton Library, Harvard University', *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, 91:3 (2001), p. 25.

<sup>52</sup> Bella Fromm, *Blood and Banquets: A Berlin Social Diary* (New York, 1942).

long after she left Germany to live in the United States.<sup>53</sup> Kaplan's argument that Jewish men were most often the target of vilification through stereotyping is undermined by her use of Fromm as a source. She quotes an anecdote recounted by Fromm but fails to acknowledge the difficulties raised by Fromm's forging of her own material.<sup>54</sup> Likewise, Friedländer does not account for how Fromm's reliability affects her story of Hitler Youth boys vandalising a Jewish jewellery store.<sup>55</sup> In either case, this particular information provided by Fromm may or may not have been authentic; we cannot tell from the text and Kaplan and Friedländer have not assisted us in the decision. In essence they ask us to accept Fromm's information at face value and their carelessness about their source leaves us not knowing if their arguments are valid.<sup>56</sup>

To summarize: the way in which many historians make use of the evidence found in personal narratives is deeply problematic. If evidence tells of Jewish people receiving ill-treatment at the hands of 'ordinary' Germans it is accepted at face value. If, however, the evidence indicates supportive or kind behaviour, historians frequently attempt to rule the evidence out on the grounds that it is biased or unrepresentative. This suggests that, instead of starting with an open mind, historians are approaching their sources with pre-conceived prejudices that influence their assessment of the reliability of the evidence that is found in those sources.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> For information on the reliability of Fromm's papers, see Henry Turner, 'Two Dubious Third Reich Diaries', *Central European History*, 33:3 (2000), pp. 415-420.

<sup>54</sup> Kaplan, *Dignity and Despair*, pp. 35-36.

<sup>55</sup> Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews, Volume 1: The Years of Persecution 1933-1939* (New York, 1997), p. 262.

<sup>56</sup> A further example of this problem, not discussed in depth here because it is not directly relevant to the topic of this thesis, has more serious consequences. Götz Aly uses Hermann Rauschning's testimony to make a point (which is key to his argument), about detailed planning for German expansion by a young academic, without acknowledging Rauschning's status as a discredited source. See Götz Aly and Susanne Heim, *Architects of Annihilation: Auschwitz and the Logic of Destruction* (London, 2002), p. 4. See also Ian Kershaw, *Hitler 1889-1936: Hubris* (London, 1998), p. xiv, where Kershaw notes that Rauschning's work should be disregarded altogether because it has so little authenticity.

<sup>57</sup> In the foreword to Samuel and Pearl Oliner's investigation of altruism in Europe under Nazism, Harold Schulweis poignantly comments: 'Paradoxically, confronting goodness may be more painfully challenging than confronting evil.' Harold M. Schulweis, 'Foreword' to *The Altruistic Personality: Rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe*, by Samuel and Pearl Oliner (New York, 1988), p. xi. As the bitter history of Germany's Third Reich has been compiled, it has somehow seemed easier to find examples of complicity with the regime than to identify instances of decency.

## What personal narratives can tell

When they are used appropriately, personal narratives have a great deal to offer.

Appropriate use of these sources includes accepting the fifth of the methodological principles that I outlined in my introduction: Sources and the evidence they yield must be approached with an open mind, recognising that they all have something to tell and should be ruled inadmissible only with very good reason. This requires a historian to start with the initial assumption that each personal narrative has some historical significance.<sup>58</sup> The rule applies to all sources, even those viewed with scepticism because historians suspect their authors of manipulating truth for some self-serving purpose. Certainly, personal narratives must be used with extreme care, but this holds true for all types of sources. There are numerous ways, however, in which personal narratives can be more useful than official sources.

Firstly, personal narratives describe what happened in the writer's immediate surroundings and offer us a ground-eye view that provides a closer and more intimate picture than that available from nearly all other types of evidence.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, they reveal what the narrators thought and felt at the time, something no other source can definitively convey.<sup>60</sup> Chaim Kaplan, a Polish Jew confined in the Warsaw ghetto, recorded in his diary:

The time may come when these words will be published. At all events, they will furnish historiographic material for the chronicle of our agony . . . . In them the truth is reflected – not a dry, embalmed truth, but a living, active truth proclaiming before the world: “Behold, there is no pain like unto mine.”<sup>61</sup>

The ground-eye view offered in eyewitness testimony gives us a perspective that is wider than usually acknowledged. Although historians designate personal narratives as unrepresentative because they are stories told by individuals, they fail to notice that the accounts actually provide us with information about the activities of all the people encountered by the narrators. Just one individual writing a diary can interact with dozens,

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<sup>58</sup> See Saul Friedländer, ‘True Believers’, *TLS*, 5161 (2002), p. 6.

<sup>59</sup> Laqueur, ‘Three Witnesses’, pp. 252-253.

<sup>60</sup> ‘Official academic history has . . . nothing to tell us about the differences in intensity of historical occurrences. To learn about that, you must read biographies, not those of statesmen but the all too rare ones of unknown individuals. There you will see that one historical event passes over the private (real) lives of people like a cloud over a lake. Nothing stirs, there is only a fleeting shadow. Another event whips up the lake as if in a thunderstorm. For a while it is scarcely recognisable. A third may, perhaps, drain the lake completely.’ Sebastian Haffner, *Defying Hitler* (London, 2002), p. 6.

<sup>61</sup> 20 February 1940. Chaim Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony* (New York, 1965), p. 121.



even hundreds of other individuals.<sup>62</sup> Records of these encounters can act as mini-opinion polls. If we view a single diarist as someone who can put us in touch with the actions of his or her community, we have the ability to build up our understanding of communities all over Germany. In this way, personal narratives can allow us to increase our understanding about the distinctive characteristics of a particular group or the difference in responses among specific communities.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, we can locate things undetected by any other source. Gestapo reports, for example, cannot reveal what happened in conversations inside people's homes, how individual shopkeepers responded to their Jewish customers, or detect spontaneous gestures of kindness or cruelty. In an atmosphere where people believed that they were being watched, supportive activities in particular were driven underground and hence became undetectable.<sup>64</sup> Despite all these qualities, most historians have failed to assign equal status to sources generated by the very people they are seeking to examine.

Personal narratives can also help us gain better understanding about the fragmentary perspectives of the people who were eyewitnesses. They allow us to discern the mistakes of judgment people can make as they observe the behaviour of others or the subtle pressures that influence attitudes. Reports compiled by the regime could not perceive these nuances of human behaviour. For instance, the extraordinary story of Christian Arras, as recounted by Mark Roseman, provides us with an example of how Jewish witnesses sometimes misunderstood the motives of the non-Jewish Germans with whom they interacted. Arras was employed to service trucks at Izbica detention camp and was able to gain access to prisoners. He became a conduit for letters and packages that passed between Marianne Strauss and her fiancé.<sup>65</sup> Marianne's explanation for his motivations was simple:

Christian was an opportunist, entirely an opportunist. He became very wealthy, [he and his wife] were very well off, working for the SS, repairing all these things. So in a way, that was how he became useful. And they were useful, but of course they were very well paid

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<sup>62</sup> A remarkable feature of the stories told by Jewish survivors who hid is the surprisingly large numbers of people, often strangers, who were involved in keeping them hidden. For example, see the stories in Eric Boehm, *We Survived* (Boulder, Col., 2003).

<sup>63</sup> Weber, "Mass of Trash", p. 40.

<sup>64</sup> See Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, p. 136. See also Geyer's argument that many individual small acts of kindness, with the reactive intent of restoring societal social bonds broken by the regime, constituted undetected resistance. Michael Geyer, 'Resistance as Ongoing Project: Visions of Order, Obligations to Strangers, Struggles for Civil Society' *Journal of Modern History*, 64: Supplement (1992), pp. S235, 237.

<sup>65</sup> Mark Roseman, *The Past in Hiding: Memory and Survival in Nazi Germany* (London, 2000).

for it, and in the end they got a lot of my [deported] aunt's things, just to keep and give back after the war if they had returned. And after the war I only saw him once.<sup>66</sup>

Because of her perception that he was financially benefiting from his efforts on behalf of her family, Marianne assumed that his motives were merely opportunistic. Later she speculated again on his motives, concluding instead that perhaps he was just a daredevil who liked taking risks.<sup>67</sup> Her basic attitude toward him was one of mistrust, and it does not seem to have occurred to her that his motive could be altruism. In the course of his investigations, Roseman uncovered more information about Christian Arras from other testimonies. He discovered that Arras had consistently and regularly delivered aid to prisoners and smuggled information back and forth from the camp. That his motives were not profiteering was proved by the testimony of some of those he assisted: "Clearly, no material incentive had been involved since the poverty-stricken [recipients] had nothing to offer."<sup>68</sup> Roseman became convinced that Arras in fact had been a hero who sought to undermine the Nazi regime and continually risked his own safety by supporting deported Jews. Marianne's perspective was limited, which prevented her from fully understanding Arras and his activities.

When historians discuss opportunistic attitudes among the population they seldom offer evidence that presents a different perspective. Personal narratives allow us to discern that not everyone sought to gain personal advantage from the misfortunes of the Jewish people. For example, Fritz Goldberg, a scriptwriter from Berlin, described the response of the non-Jewish German who inherited his job: 'He treated me with respect and consideration, and repeatedly told me he was embarrassed he was to be getting his position in such a way.'<sup>69</sup> With no hint of taking advantage, Ludwig Misch's neighbour told him as he was being evicted from his flat: "I am ashamed to be a German."<sup>70</sup> As a lawyer banned from appearing in court, Siegfried Neumann found his colleagues not seeking benefit from the situation, but rather covering for him.<sup>71</sup> Victor Klemperer, in spite of his pessimism, experienced support from colleagues on numerous occasions.<sup>72</sup> Only a systematic analysis of personal narratives could reveal whether such stories were typical or atypical. The

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 201.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 202.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 201.

<sup>69</sup> Fritz Goldberg in Limberg, p. 114.

<sup>70</sup> Ludwig Misch, a musician from Berlin, in Limberg, p. 117.

<sup>71</sup> Siegfried Neumann in Limberg, p. 30.

<sup>72</sup> For specific examples, see Chapter Three of this dissertation, footnote 166.

existence of such testimony demonstrates how dangerous it is to pluck examples from personal narratives and use them merely to illustrate or add colour to a pre-conceived argument. We could find examples in personal narratives of the complete range of interactions between Jewish and non-Jewish Germans. Used unsystematically, personal narratives can therefore be made to serve almost any argument that a historian might care to make.

Personal narratives also give us the opportunity to glimpse other nuances of human behaviour, important to the process of interpretation, which official sources cannot reveal. For example, a relationship described in Klemperer's diaries permits us yet another perspective on the issue of opportunistic behaviour. Berger, a friendly and talkative greengrocer in Dölzsch, moved into Victor Klemperer's house when it was confiscated. Klemperer suspected that Berger's previous kindness was motivated by a desire to get his hands on Klemperer's house.<sup>73</sup> Yet Berger emerges clearly from the pages of the diary as someone who was anti-Nazi and by Klemperer's initial assessment a 'very decent man'.<sup>74</sup> Later, Berger demonstrated behaviour that the diarist believed was opportunistic, so, after the war, the vengeful Klemperer turned the tables on him with some opportunism of his own. Klemperer managed to keep Berger's possessions (although only temporarily in the end), regardless of the pleas of the former tenant.<sup>75</sup> This tit-for-tat opportunism serves to draw attention to the possibility that the two men engaged in essentially human behaviour that was not connected to the measures taken by the regime. It is possible that their opportunism was simply a reflection of how humans can behave toward each other in any society at any time. Despite the extraordinary situation in Germany at the time, not all behaviours were extraordinary. This begs the question of whether it is correct to assign new meaning (complicity in Nazi crimes) to the opportunistic behaviour of those who did take advantage of Jewish misfortune. Whatever the answer, personal narratives offer the opportunity to re-examine the questions from different perspectives, to test the theories, and to check that conclusions are credible.

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<sup>73</sup> 16 December 1939. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 309. Klemperer was initially happy with the arrangement but vacillated in his opinions of Berger and his motivations as time progressed.

<sup>74</sup> 10 May 1938, 16 December 1939. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, pp. 246, 308.

<sup>75</sup> 20 June 1945, 14 July 1945. Victor Klemperer, *The Lesser Evil: The Diaries of Victor Klemperer 1945-59* (London, 2003), pp. 4-5, 22.

Personal narratives can offer even further interpretive possibilities that are not found in other types of sources. For example, historians often refer to the breakdown in relationships between Jewish and non-Jewish Germans. Their interpretations generally assert that relations disintegrated because ‘ordinary’ Germans turned their backs on their Jewish acquaintances. There are plenty of statements in personal narratives to support this argument, such as:

Personal relations with “Aryans,” even when it was a matter of saying hello on the street and in public, dwindled more and more. Even former close friends and acquaintances, colleagues, and wartime comrades shied away from talking to us, greeted us in secret, and excused this behaviour with their fear of persecution or other difficulties.<sup>76</sup>

This statement could be taken at face value and plenty of similar accounts can be found to support the concept of ‘Aryans’ turning their backs on former friends. But personal narratives also reveal other elements that contributed to the breakdown of relationships. The following selection of anecdotes shows that, at least in some cases, Jewish people were the ones who withdrew from relationships, usually for reasons of self-preservation. This means that rejection by non-Jewish Germans was not the only explanation for disrupted relationships:

Frau Voss . . . has to go to an ‘Aryan’ birthday, she would prefer not go, she cannot bear to see any Aryans any more.<sup>77</sup>

I never go anywhere any more. I am so well known through my profession and my position; why should I make trouble for myself and for others? I’m happy to be at home in peace.<sup>78</sup>

In 1935 . . . I was visiting my hometown. No one had lifted a finger against the people there. But they were lonely, lonely. They only left their houses if they had no other choice. Not out of fear that something could happen to them, but rather so they would not have to keep experiencing how people avoided them.<sup>79</sup>

I was more frightened than ever. I now ate my meals alone in a separate room next to the dining hall. I entered the room cautiously, so as not to meet anyone, gulped down my lunch in ten minutes and then disappeared. When I walked onto the street, I first took a long look at the passersby to be sure I was in no danger.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Joseph Levy in Limberg, p. 81.

<sup>77</sup> 12 August 1940. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 337.

<sup>78</sup> 9 October 1935. Hertha Nathorff, *Das Tagebuch der Hertha Nathorff: Berlin-New York, Aufzeichnungen 1933 bis 1945* (Munich, 1987), trans. from Hermann Graml, *Antisemitism in the Third Reich* (Oxford, 1992), p. 210.

<sup>79</sup> Heinemann Stern in Limberg, p. 79.

<sup>80</sup> Gerta Pfeffer in Limberg, pp. 66-67. The cause of her fear was the threat that photos of her birthday party, attended by Nazi party members, would be published in *Der Stürmer*.

My friend Emmy invited me to our usual group hike . . . [She] whispered in my ear, “You are wonderful, you are just as much a part of us as everyone else.” Although I thought that was a good thing, I sensed she was also aware that I was no longer one of them. She later asked me once more to take part in our usual hike. But I could hide no longer. “No thanks, I can come with you no more.” “Why not? We have reassembled our group, and the others won’t notice because you don’t look Jewish. Please come along!” She did not know how much that hurt me. But this “they won’t notice” made up my mind not to go. I never hiked with them again.<sup>81</sup>

A [non-Jewish] gentleman addressed [Victor Klemperer] on Postplatz. “Do you not recognise me? . . . I passed you recently, you saw me and looked away. I was afraid you looked away because you thought I would not greet you. That is why I am addressing you today. How are you?”<sup>82</sup>

[As a Jew] I was afraid to address acquaintances on the street for fear of being reported for something, and I could also harm the people I spoke to.<sup>83</sup>

For the sake of our gentile friends, we turned our heads so as not to greet them in the streets, for we did not want to bring upon them the danger of imprisonment for being considered a friend of the Jews.<sup>84</sup>

Informing on people began to assume unimaginable dimensions, and those people who had kept up their friendships and social relations with one another without regard to racial considerations now had to stop if they wanted to survive.<sup>85</sup>

Historians have noted the retreat into the ‘private sphere’ because of the pressures for all those living in the Third Reich. We need to build into our understanding of relationships between Jewish and non-Jewish Germans that the withdrawal was conceivably mutual.<sup>86</sup> Although the difference is subtle it can be a significant factor in discussions of how non-Jews were complicit in the Nazi rejection of Jewish people.

## Systematic analysis of personal narratives

The sixth, and last, methodological principle that I listed in my introduction is that historians must approach their material as systematically as possible. The best approach to source material is through a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis. Each of these types of analysis can bring a different dimension to historical study and each requires

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<sup>81</sup> Luise Stein in Limberg, pp. 144-145.

<sup>82</sup> 11 February 1936. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 147.

<sup>83</sup> Gerta Pfeffer in Limberg, p. 65.

<sup>84</sup> Monika Richarz, *Jewish Life In Germany: Memoirs from Three Centuries* (Bloomington, 1991), p. 352.

<sup>85</sup> Eva Wysbar in Limberg, p. 87.

<sup>86</sup> For discussion of the retreat into the ‘private sphere’ see Kershaw, *Popular Opinion*, p. 360 and Pierre Ayçoberry, *The Social History of the Third Reich, 1933-1945* (New York, 1999), pp. 209-211.

a systematic approach.<sup>87</sup> Quantitative analysis can be used to evaluate typicality, to assess reliability, and to test hypotheses. Qualitative research is concerned to develop a richer understanding of the topic with particular focus on the perspectives of the group under scrutiny.<sup>88</sup> Following principles of quantitative research requires us to accept that it involves empirical enquiry and that observable measurable facts can be identified in the available evidence.<sup>89</sup> This can be problematic for many historians, particularly those operating from within a post-modernist theoretical framework.<sup>90</sup> These historians are joined by others who dismiss any possibility of quantitative analysis of the available evidence from Nazi Germany.<sup>91</sup> It is reasonable, however, to argue that historical argument about events from the past must be able to be put to some form of test.<sup>92</sup> Moreover, by the very fact that historians use terminology such as ‘great majority’, ‘vast majority’, or ‘most’ means that they have employed some sort of quantifying procedure to argue authoritative propositions about what did or did not occur during the Third Reich.<sup>93</sup> My argument suggests that by assembling a larger body of evidence and ensuring qualitative methods are also applied, it is legitimate to undertake a comparative study of the stories told by eyewitnesses in order to locate a reasoned hypothesis about interactions among the ‘ordinary’ people. Precedents for this type of analysis, such as the surveys undertaken by Eric Johnson and Karl-Heinz Reuband, are already accepted by historians.<sup>94</sup>

Qualitative analysis is an essential adjunct to quantitative analysis provided a sound methodological approach is consciously applied. Psychology researchers have developed guidelines for appropriate qualitative research which can be adapted for historical practice. Good qualitative historical enquiry will include being transparent about methodology and perspective, will pay careful attention to context, will make appropriate use of examples,

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<sup>87</sup> Lincoln, ‘Emerging Criteria’, p. 276. See also Fairburn, *Social History*, pp. 159-160.

<sup>88</sup> Robert Elliott *et al*, ‘Evolving guidelines for publication of qualitative research studies in psychology and related fields’, *British Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 38: 3 (1999), pp. 215-229.

<sup>89</sup> Nahid Golafshani, ‘Understanding Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research’, *The Qualitative Report*, 8:4 (2003), p. 598.

<sup>90</sup> ‘Historical narratives are verbal fictions, the contents of which are as much *invented* as *found*.’ Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore, 1978), p. 82.

<sup>91</sup> Nechama Tec, ‘Diaries and Oral History: Some Methodological Considerations’, *Religion and the Arts*, 4:1 (2000), p. 93 and Kershaw, *Popular Opinion*, p. 6.

<sup>92</sup> Joyce Appleby *et al*, *Telling the Truth about History* (New York, 1994), p. 254.

<sup>93</sup> The claim often made by historians that their conclusions can only be tentative is undermined by the language they use in the process of arguing to these conclusions.

<sup>94</sup> Eric Johnson and Karl-Heinz Reuband, *What We Knew: Terror, Mass Murder and Everyday Life in Nazi Germany* (London, 2005). Note that the Johnson study contains differences because they were able to interrogate their sources. This is not possible with pre-existing diaries, memoirs, oral histories or other personal narratives.

will permit interrogation for credibility, will address specific questions without undue extrapolation to more general questions, and will argue coherently in order to further enlighten readers.<sup>95</sup>

Historians must firstly be transparent about their methodology. Transparency requires scholars to state clearly how they approached the evidence, the methods they employed and how they arrived at their conclusions. An essential precursor is self-awareness (and acknowledgement) of stance or motivation. Lack of this self-awareness can lead to difficulties with coherence and consistency in the argument.<sup>96</sup> The position of a historian, whether motivated by curiosity, personal background, or political orientation, can influence the argument, just as an interviewer can have impact on an oral history. Failure to acknowledge this denies the reader opportunity to be fully informed as he or she weighs and interprets the historian's argument. Some historians openly acknowledge their personal motivations or backgrounds.<sup>97</sup> Many do not. Those who do, however, seldom go on to explain their methodology, drawing the reader's attention to both the weaknesses and the strengths of the methodology. Neither do they always acknowledge the part that speculation plays in their argument.<sup>98</sup>

Thorough enquiry into context is also essential in qualitative analysis. Every source must always be assessed for its potential to provide reliable information. This includes identifying, insofar as is possible, the background to each source, the context under which it was compiled, by whom and why, the steps involved in creating it and the history of its travels before coming to the attention of the scholar. The source can then be categorised by the circumstances under which it was created, its function and role, and its relationship to the topic or groups under investigation. Even though most historians would insist that this is standard historical practice, nonetheless, they fail to convey the results of their source

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<sup>95</sup> Elliott, 'Evolving guidelines', pp. 220-224. Elliott lists the following guidelines shared by both qualitative and quantitative approaches to psychology research: 1) Explicit scientific context and purpose, 2) Appropriate methods, 3) Respect for participants, 4) Specification of methods, 5) Appropriate discussion, 6) Clarity of presentation, 7) Contribution to knowledge. Others especially pertinent to qualitative research are: 1) Owning one's perspective, 2) Situating the sample, 3) Grounding in examples, 4) Providing credibility checks, 5) Coherence, 6) Accomplishing general vs. specific research tasks, 7) Resonating with readers.

<sup>96</sup> Ronald J. Chenail, 'Navigating the "Seven C's": Curiosity, Confirmation, Comparison, Changing, Collaborating, Critiquing, and Combinations', *The Qualitative Report*, 4:3/4 (2000), n.p.  
<http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR4-3/sevencs.html>.

<sup>97</sup> See for example: Friedländer, *Years of Persecution*, p. 1; Kershaw, *Popular Opinion*, p. vii; or Kaplan, *Dignity and Despair*, pp. vii-ix.

<sup>98</sup> Lincoln, 'Emerging Criteria', p. 279.

investigations in their text, leaving themselves exposed to questions about methodology. In addition, failing to be diligent and transparent about the source background and context can cause two further problems. Firstly, it places the integrity of their argument at risk, as we saw with Kaplan's and Friedländer's use of Bella Fromm as a source. Secondly, it denies the reader the opportunity to weigh up possibilities of alternative interpretations, so the historical construction becomes entirely subject to the prejudices of the individual historian. Information on context of origin is often readily available in personal narratives generated during and after the Third Reich, for example, in the 'Harvard collection' of essays.<sup>99</sup> Because these and so many other authors have self-consciously recorded their stories for purposes of memorialisation, contextual details are often also carefully included in personal narratives. In qualitative analysis, this assists substantially with evaluating testimonials.

Where examples are used to support an argument, they must be representative of both their original source and the outcomes of systematic analysis. Anecdotes from personal testimonies can play two kinds of roles in supporting the historian's argument. The importance of being representative is not as crucial in the first kind of role. These examples are used strictly to 'add colour' to a discussion; the points of argument stand independent from the example and its inclusion makes no difference to the argument either way. For example, Richard Evans discusses technological progress during the Third Reich, as exemplified by the building of the new *Autobahn*.<sup>100</sup> To illustrate his point, Evans records comments from Klemperer's diary about his car ownership and experiences of driving. Evans' main point relates to the growth in vehicle production and ownership, supported by footnoted statistical information. Whether or not Klemperer's comments are included in the text makes no actual difference to the discussion, but serves to enhance the readability of the information and provide an intimate glimpse of one person's experience with driving on the new motorways. This is a perfectly legitimate use of personal testimony even though it does not admit any recognition of the full value to be drawn out of personal narratives.

The second role examples can play requires close attention to their ability to be representative because they constitute the supporting 'proof' for an argument. We have

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<sup>99</sup> Liebersohn, pp.1-130.

<sup>100</sup> Evans, *Third Reich*, p. 326.



already seen how Kaplan argues that persecution of Jews was extended to harassment while attending funerals. The only evidence she offers comes from two examples. Even a larger number of examples would still not prove the point she is making because there is no explanation of how representative her examples are. Her technique is to argue by ‘layering’ anecdotes, piling up example after example, to create an overall impression. This leads to conclusions based on what seems to be there rather than what actually is there. To make her claim in a manner that is methodologically robust, Kaplan would need to make clear to her readers that her examples were genuinely representative. She would also have to demonstrate how she concluded that they were in fact representative by being transparent about her methodology.

Historians should be systematic as they make decisions about how representative their examples are. The first step is to be sure examples are representative of the source from which they originate. This requires examining the context and origins of both author and document, quantifying specific incidents (e.g.: ‘a shopkeeper slipped me some of his best tomatoes’) and evaluating them against general or summarizing statements (e.g.: ‘all Germans treated us badly’ or ‘things got worse as time went on’), and taking into account any other supporting information. The second step is to compare this information with other sources generated under similar conditions to be able to see any pattern which emerges. A useful third step is to divide the body of evidence into categories such as oral histories, memoirs or diaries, sources generated during or after the Third Reich, so that the specific issues of some types of source, such as problems of memory recall, can be exposed. For example, if a body of diaries reveal the same patterns of evidence as memoirs, we can with greater clarity identify how substantial a factor memory is. By engaging with a substantial body of evidence from personal narratives and following this extensive process, at the very least we have the potential to locate patterns of typicality.

With the principle of systematic analysis in mind we can now turn to personal narratives to test some specific aspects of historians’ assertions about relations between Jewish and non-Jewish Germans. The analysis uses some personal narratives that are among the most commonly referenced by the historians discussed in this dissertation.<sup>101</sup> Two significant

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<sup>101</sup> The main personal narratives referenced from this point forward are the Limberg and Rübsaat memoirs (English translation) and the 1933-45 diaries of Victor Klemperer, although others are also briefly referenced.

questions sit behind the analysis. Do any patterns emerge from systematic analysis of personal narratives? Does systematic analysis confirm the assertions of historians?

As we explore these questions, there are two provisos to keep in mind. The first is that the exercise undertaken below is an experiment. It does not pretend to provide definitive answers. It is an exploration of a limited and flawed number of samples. But it tests the ground to see if there is potential to engage a wider, more formal study on the same question. The second proviso is that we must not forget that we are dealing with information where the eyewitnesses tell us their perspectives about what they experienced. As such, the data is more subjective than empirical. In historical re-construction, however, sometimes this is all we have to go on. As we have already established, the information from personal narratives is no more, or less, flawed than the information available from the most commonly used sources for Third Reich history, the reports generated by the regime itself.

The methodology for this exercise was simply to make a count of the stories told by eyewitnesses and combine it with other information to build a picture of what they chose to tell us about their experiences. However simplistic or crude the count method is, nevertheless, it is systematic and gathers information from the same sources used by scholars, who employ these stories to provide a basis or support for their own arguments. While there are many cautionary factors to take into account, this process is at least more systematic than the entirely impressionistic approach which has hitherto been used by the historians we have examined so far.

Before analysing what personal narratives say about relationships we must assess their relative strengths and weaknesses. The main body of evidence used below is the Limberg and Rübsaat selection of memoirs from the 'Harvard collection'. This collection is the result of an essay contest sponsored by Harvard University in 1940 which, combined with a few other memoirs held by the Leo Baeck Institute, provides a body of information published and widely referenced in different formats.<sup>102</sup> The Limberg selection comprises material from twenty-eight of the essay writers, translated into English. Limberg and

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<sup>102</sup> Most particularly Monica Richarz (ed.), *Jewish Life In Germany: Memoirs from Three Centuries* (Bloomington, 1991), abridged from *Jüdisches Leben in Deutschland: Selbstzeugnisse zur Sozialgeschichte*, 3 vols. (Stuttgart, 1976-1982), and Limberg, *Germans No More*, abridged from *Sie durften nicht mehr Deutsche sein. Jüdischer Alltag in Selbstzeugnissen 1933 – 1938* (Frankfurt, 1990).

Rübsaat have selectively culled the essays from the larger collection and although they do not acknowledge their editorial intervention, they have also reduced the size of some essays.<sup>103</sup> For example, Necheles-Magnus submitted twenty-six typewritten pages, containing material such as descriptions of her student life, but her contribution selected for Limberg focuses solely on personal experiences in her medical practice.<sup>104</sup>

Furthermore, experiences of life under the regime are only partially represented in the Limberg selection because of the confinement to a specific time period (1933-1938). They cannot reveal what happened in encounters occurring after the introduction of the yellow star or when deportations began. The limitations of selectivity also extend to the original authors themselves. Given a specified theme, the writers have made selective choices by choosing just some elements from their own experiences deemed related to the topic and worthy to discuss. Nonetheless, the story elements selected by the writers can still be accepted as significant and representative in their minds. By conscious choice the writers have decreed which of their experiences assume significance *for them*.

Aside from these weaknesses, this collection also has advantages over some other memoirs. The editors claim the collection ‘paints the most representative picture possible of Jewish life in Germany’ in the years 1933-1938.<sup>105</sup> While the statement is rather hyperbolic, they have made a genuine effort to cover the gamut of life for the Jewish population of Nazi Germany through the selection process and division of essays into categories. The memoirs give us at least a glimpse into a wide range of Jewish experiences. They also have a degree of immediacy. Some were recorded months, or even weeks, after the events they described, so issues of memory recall after significant time elapse are not a problem. Another advantage is also due to the time of writing. For most of the writers the full extent of the unfolding horror was not yet known, thereby giving them no opportunity to reinterpret events influenced by the full knowledge of Shoah.

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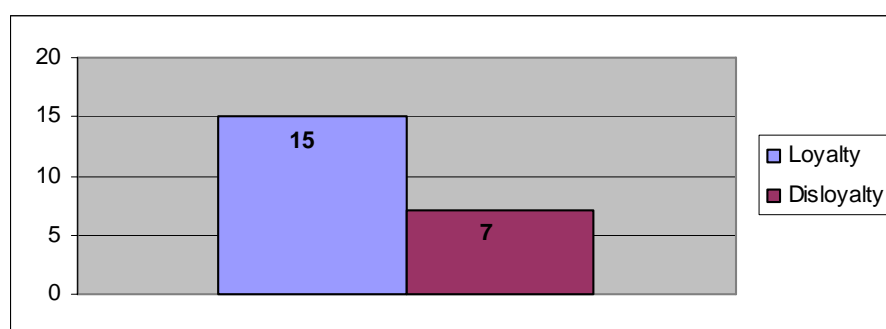
<sup>103</sup> Approximately 230 German refugees responded to an invitation to describe their life in Germany before and after 1933, the intention being to use the material “for a study of the social and psychological effect of National Socialism on German Society and the German people.” Liebersohn, p. 1. See in particular footnotes 1 and 2 in Liebersohn, p. 1, in for information on the identities of the contributors: not all were authentically identified, and not all were German, Jewish, or unsympathetic to the Nazi cause.

<sup>104</sup> The recommended (but not compulsory) length for the essays was at least 20,000 words. Liebersohn, pp. 3, 90, and Necheles-Magnus in Limberg, pp. 19-21.

<sup>105</sup> Limberg, p. viii.

The first question concerns how the Limberg memoirs can shed new light on relationships between Jews and non-Jews in the workplace and in wider contexts. Loyalty was one of the more common themes that emerged from the essays in this collection. For example, we have already seen that Doctor Necheles-Magnus described nine instances of loyalty amongst her patients with no instance of disloyalty recorded.<sup>106</sup> Friedrich Weil, a wine merchant, reports three instances of loyalty from clients and four of disloyalty.<sup>107</sup> Because the sample is so small, neither of these provides sufficient information to satisfactorily draw adequate pictures of the responses of ‘Aryan’ patients to their Jewish doctors or customers to their suppliers. But, if a number of similar accounts were compared with each other, it might be possible to locate patterns leading to a typical picture.

Where the writers discussed relationships with non-Jews, the category of relationship most frequently mentioned was client/customer interaction. Twenty-two stories in the Limberg selection revolved around whether the Jews had experienced loyalty or disloyalty in these pre-existing relationships. Figure 2 shows that they chose to relate more instances of loyalty than of disloyalty. What does this tell us? Did they simply prefer to recollect more good things about the life they left behind than bad things? Or were they being accurate in their representation of how events occurred? We cannot tell from this limited information but it is clear enough that there is justification to widen our examination.



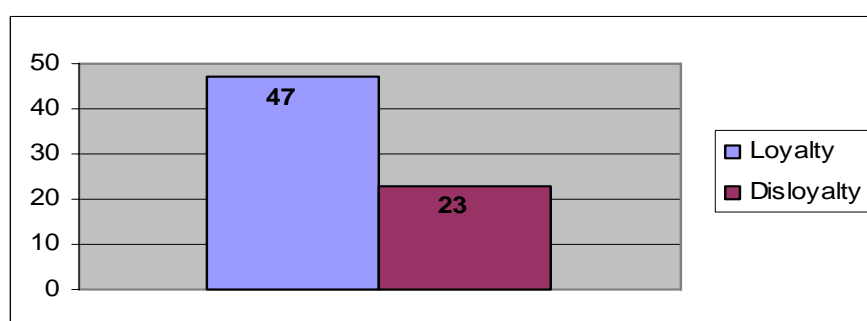
**Figure 2: Incidence of loyalty/disloyalty in client/customer relationships (Limberg)**

If we widen the count from client/customer interaction to all instances of interaction with non-Jews, the larger sample shows that incidents of loyalty still outnumber incidents of disloyalty. For an incident to be assessed as specifically involving an element of loyalty (or

<sup>106</sup> Henriette Necheles-Magnus in Limberg, pp. 19-21.

<sup>107</sup> Friedrich Weil in Limberg, pp. 14-16 and 48-50. Weil also writes about several other acts of client kindness and remorse but these are not recorded here as acts of loyalty due to timing: by taking place just before his departure they cannot demonstrate commitment to relationship.

disloyalty) there had to be indication of prior relationship between the Jewish and non-Jewish protagonists. Of the total 132 encounters between Jews and non-Jews described in Limberg, seventy (53 percent) fit this specification. Forty-seven tell of a non-Jew demonstrating some act of loyalty towards a Jew, such as continuing a social or business relationship in spite of the adverse situation, covering for someone in order to protect them, or provisioning them (Figure 3). The twenty-three instances of disloyalty mostly involve cessation of social or business relationships.



**Figure 3: Incidence of loyalty/disloyalty during all encounters with non-Jews (Limberg)**

In all forty-seven occurrences of loyalty, some type of *active* behaviour was engaged by the ‘Aryan’.<sup>108</sup> For example, one account tells of a nanny who helped smuggle the children in her care across the border to safety, leaving all her possessions behind and not daring to return because of specific threats against her.<sup>109</sup> Others stories are less dramatic, with acts of loyalty being as simple as customers buying extra produce to demonstrate their support, even when they could barely afford it.<sup>110</sup> By contrast, of the total twenty-three incidents of disloyalty, *passive* behaviour (withdrawal of relationship or silence at key moments) occurred in sixteen instances with active behaviour indicated in only seven instances, for example, refusal to pay a debt or a daughter persuading her mother to divorce her Jewish adoptive father.<sup>111</sup>

The act of demonstrating loyalty carried some danger for the ‘Aryan’ participant in thirty (64 percent) of the total forty-seven instances. Sixteen (34 percent) involved a measure of public protest against the regime, such as the old lady who cursed the regime so loudly her

<sup>108</sup> In a formal study of this issue, this type of information would have to be compared with other studies, such as those undertaken by Johnson and Reuband where 38% of their respondents indicated they received significant support or help from non-Jewish-Germans, meaning 62% did not. (For those still in Germany after 1941, the percentage for those receiving help climbed to 61%). Johnson, *What We Knew*, pp.282-283.

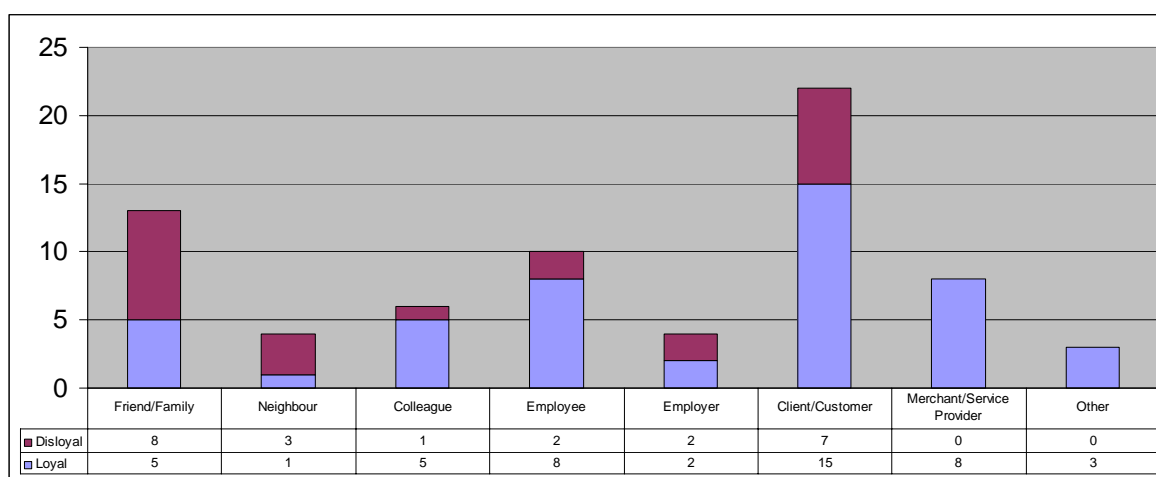
<sup>109</sup> Eva Wysbar in Limberg, p. 94.

<sup>110</sup> Henriette Necheles-Magnus in Limberg, pp. 19-20.

<sup>111</sup> Friedrich Weil, David Grünspecht, and Raffael Mibberlin in Limberg, pp. 15, 52, 63.

Jewish supplier asked her to quieten or two businessmen who refused to erect “Jews not welcome” signs in their shops.<sup>112</sup> Twenty-four (51 percent) faced the risk of physical danger, arrest, loss or abuse.<sup>113</sup> For example, in spite of frequent threats and public insults, a household maid continued to visit the family she had worked for until they left Germany in 1939.<sup>114</sup> The above information indicates that the Jewish narrators in this sample were far more likely to report supportive behaviour that involved proactive behaviour and less likely to report proactive adversarial behaviour. The two most likely explanations are that these are the types of behaviour they preferred to report (for any number of speculated reasons) or that their reporting was in fact accurate and provided genuine representations of what happened. Whatever the reason, the information contrasts markedly with the anecdotes most often commented on by the secondary sources, which more often than not focus on proactive adversarial behaviour as being the dominant experience of Jews who later told of their experiences.

If the seventy instances of loyalty or disloyalty are divided into specific categories of relationship, eight categories can be identified: Friend/Family, Neighbour, Colleague, Employee, Employer, Client/Customer, Merchant/Service Provider, and Other (Figure 4). Of the three incidents falling into the ‘Other’ category, two indicated there was a pre-existing relationship without specifying its nature, the other involved the wife of the narrator’s building doorman.



**Figure 4: Demonstrations of loyalty/disloyalty in existing relationships (Limberg)**

<sup>112</sup> Friedrich Weil and Leo Grünbaum in Limberg, pp. 50, 69.

<sup>113</sup> For example, Limberg, pp. 53, 61, 67, 94, 165. Ten (21%) instances involved both protest and risk.

<sup>114</sup> Joseph Levy in Limberg, p. 80.

Figure 4 shows that in only two categories (Friend/Family and Neighbours), incidents of disloyalty outweighed loyalty. This is somewhat surprising, particularly as conceivably it indicates that the essays writers recalled that the more intimate relationships were the most damaged. Withdrawal of relationship, usually passive or silent but no less painful, was the issue in ten of the total seventeen incidents falling into these two categories. Active rejection (the daughter who persuaded her mother to divorce her adoptive father because he was Jewish) occurred in just one incident.

On the whole, their recollection of events involves telling stories about being treated with sympathy more often than not. This information cannot form the basis for an argument or a conclusion. But careful and critical analysis does tell us is that perhaps widening the search, similarly analysing a much larger body of diaries and memoirs, may reveal information that although carrying a number of cautions, yields data that is more empirically based than the impressionistic surveys undertaken by most historians. There is enough information here to justify calling for a re-examination of at least one assertion made by historians. As already mentioned in Chapter One, Bankier cites motives of job preservation when maids objected to the Nuremberg Laws.<sup>115</sup> In personal narratives there are numerous anecdotal accounts, which Bankier does not account for, of maids who remained loyal to Jewish employers, even in the face of great personal risk. Some of these are, for example: 'our loyal Anna' who financially provided for her employers and others when their funds were frozen, 'our Lina' who was followed by an equally loyal successor, 'M' who refused to stop visiting even when harassed and threatened, the faithful staff of Eva Wysbar, one of whom gave up everything she had for the sake of her employer's family, or generous Agnes Scholze, who appears many times in the pages of Klemperer's diaries.<sup>116</sup> If a systematic survey of workplace or relationship loyalties reveals patterns, then perhaps it is time to re-examine the basis upon which historians rest their claims.

What does systematic analysis of two samples of personal narratives reveal about attitudes and behaviours toward Jewish people over time? For this exercise, I assembled a sample of oral histories for comparison with the Limberg memoirs. This oral history sample contains three sets of oral histories (see Figure 5), two of which were conducted in informal

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<sup>115</sup> Bankier, *Germans*, p. 80.

<sup>116</sup> 'Aralk'; Eva Wysbar; Joseph Levy; Rafael Mibberlin in Limberg, pp. 60-61, 80-81, 93-94, 173-179.

journalistic style by Cynthia Crane and Alison Owings.<sup>117</sup> The other set, from the Johnson and Reuband collection, contrasts with the Crane and Owings sets because their almost 3,000 surveys and 200 face-to-face interviews, distilled into a smaller collection of representative testimonies, were conducted under rigorous and systematic conditions.<sup>118</sup> The second sample contains the written memoirs of the Limberg English translation. This collection, which ends at 1938, records a slightly larger number of incidents (128) than the oral histories (101).<sup>119</sup>

<i>Source</i>	<i>No. of Incidents</i>	<i>% of total sample</i>
<i>Crane</i>	13	12.87 %
<i>Johnson</i>	58	57.43 %
<i>Owings</i>	30	29.70 %
	<b>101</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Figure 5: Oral history samples: encounters with non-Jews**

Again we must note that the composition of the oral history and memoir samples is more random and considerably smaller than would be legitimate for a formal and extensive survey. If the Limberg collection was to undergo formal and comprehensive analysis, the essential first step would be to refer back to the original documents in their unedited format. For the experimental exercises conducted in this chapter, the best use of them in their edited and translated format is to compare them with other sources to see if the information they offer is consistent with other testimonies. A proper survey would access the substantial body of personal narrative literature now available and clear categories could be established: division by genre (diary, oral history – formal or informal, or written memoir), time of recording (during the regime, immediately after or long after), category of narrator (Jewish or non-Jewish), and region of origin. As already mentioned,

<sup>117</sup> Cynthia Crane, *Divided Lives: The Untold Stories of Jewish-Christian Women in Nazi Germany* (New York, 2003), and Alison Owings, *Frauen: German Women Recall the Third Reich* (New Brunswick, 1993). Note that the oral histories recorded by Crane and Owings were not conducted under rigorous interview conditions. The Owings' interviews in particular are somewhat compromised by interviewer involvement. The Johnson surveys and interviews were conducted according to standard opinion research methodology. For reasons of space, I cannot discuss at length here the respective strengths and weakness of these sources, which I only briefly reference here. In a larger, more formal study, I would take a different methodological approach to each of the two types of interview.

<sup>118</sup> Johnson, *What We Knew* (London, 2005).

<sup>119</sup> Four 'neutral' experiences, having neither positive nor negative effects on Jews, were excluded from the count of incidents in Limberg. These concerned observations of incidents occurring between 'Aryans' and not involving interactions with Jews.



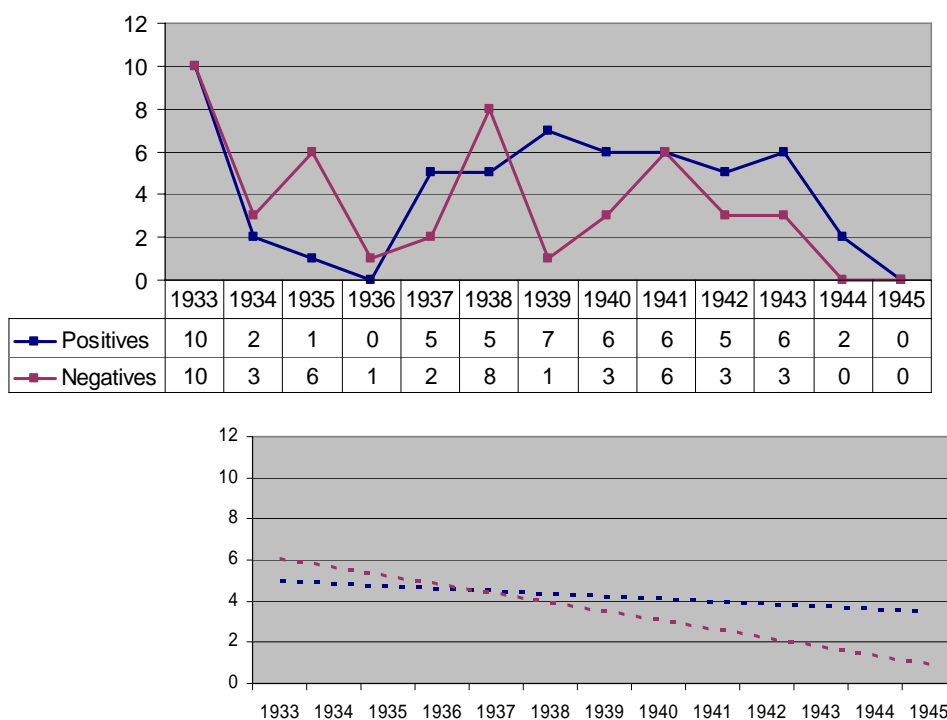
discrimination between general or imprecise statements ('Things got worse as time went on', 'on the whole we felt supported by our Aryan friends'), and descriptions of specific incidents ('A man approached me on the street, shook my hand and apologised for the way Jews are being treated'), have potential to reveal patterns. Because we are only concerned here to establish if there is potential for further investigation, these small samples can act as indicators of what could be learned by counting and dating accounts of specific encounters between Jews and non-Jews (Figures 6, 7).<sup>120</sup>

The graphs below, which summarise the results of the count method, are fairly self-explanatory. Figure 6 shows that the oral history sample contains stories that had both negative and positive effects on the narrators.<sup>121</sup> Overall, the narrators of the oral histories told fifty-five stories that had a positive effect on them, and forty-six that had negative effects. When the incidents described are charted in a graph to show the years during which they occurred we can see from the trendlines that the number of 'positive' stories told about encounters with non-Jews dropped slightly over time. The number of 'negative' encounters dropped more significantly. A pattern of escalation in negative encounters with non-Jews is not demonstrated in the stories told by these narrators. In fact, they chose to tell more stories about 'positive' than 'negative' encounters in the later years of the regime.

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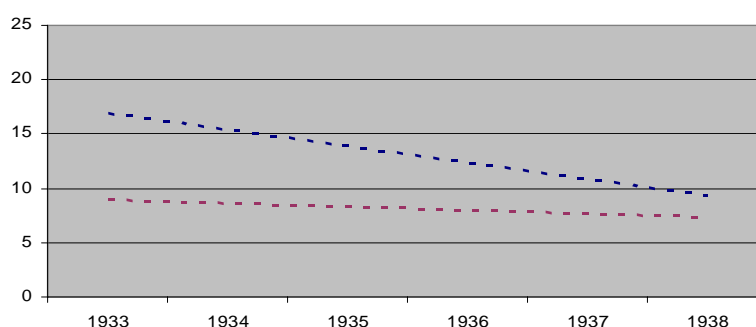
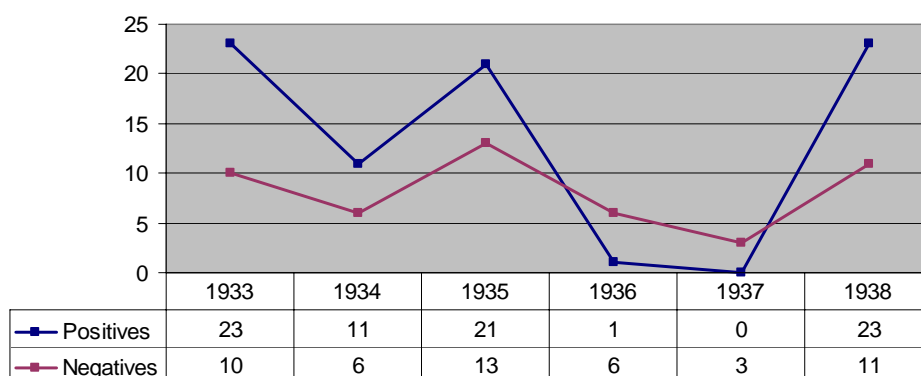
<sup>120</sup> In most cases (81%) narrators specified dates or they were calculated from biographical information and historical context (e.g. 1933 boycott, November 9 pogrom). The remaining 19% of dates were estimated by logical deduction from the biographical or contextual information.

<sup>121</sup> From this point forward in the thesis, the designators 'positive', 'negative', or 'neutral' (with or without quotation marks) will represent the emotive responses evoked by the experiences of eyewitnesses. 'Positive' responses are those which provide temporary hope or uplift of the senses, 'Negative' are those contributing to emotions such as depression, anger, or sense of loss, 'Neutral' are those where no emotional response is evoked. These designations will be occasionally reiterated throughout the text for ease of reading.



**Figure 6: Encounters (101) with non-Jews over time: oral history samples, with trendlines**

As seen in Figure 6 above, the stories told by the memoir writers (Figure 7) also show that for every year of the regime in which they were in Germany (note these stories are for the years 1933-1938 only), they had more stories to tell about ‘positive’ encounters than ‘negative’. In total, they described seventy-nine positive incidents and forty-nine negative. The trendline for negative stories moves down slightly, but the trendline for positive experiences moves down at a faster rate. Even though the rate of positive encounters dropped overall and was still moving downwards around the times the narrators left the country, it still maintains a higher position than the rate of negative encounters.



**Figure 7: Encounters (128) with non-Jews over time: memoir samples, with trendlines**

Differences and similarities co-exist in the sample graphs. For example, the jumps in negative experiences in 1935 make it worth exploring further to see if empirical evidence about responses to the Nuremberg Laws can be distilled from personal narratives.

Likewise, peaks in 1938 indicate another possible time period to further explore. The trends in negative experiences are slightly, but not dramatically different, in each of the samples. The oral histories graph records a significant downward trend where the written memoirs in Limberg record only a very slight trend down. Most significantly, however, the samples do not support the statements made by historians about deteriorating attitudes towards the Jewish population.

It is beyond the parameters of this dissertation to speculate why the patterns in these samples emerge as they do.<sup>122</sup> Nevertheless, both secondary and primary sources suggest factors that must be considered alongside any examination of the issue. Firstly, the policies of the regime meant Jewish contact with ‘Aryans’ was increasingly reduced to a minimum.<sup>123</sup> Secondly, once deportations began, aside from those who successfully hid,

<sup>122</sup> See Chapter Three for further information on the same topic found in Klemperer’s diaries.

<sup>123</sup> Hans Mommsen, ‘What Did the Germans Know about the Genocide of the Jews?’, in *November 1938: From ‘Reichskristallnacht’ to Genocide*, ed. Walter Pehle (New York, 1991), pp. 189-190.

Barkai tells us that only a few ageing Jews remained for anyone to have contact with.<sup>124</sup> Thirdly, for the 'Aryan' Germans, the personal stresses of war would have impacted all their relationships and behaviours, not just those with the Jewish outcasts.<sup>125</sup> Fourthly, the impact of disillusionment must be weighed up, as suggested by one survivor:

The young husband of the woman above us was killed. We heard her crying. She didn't say "Heil Hitler" any more. She spoke in a very kind manner to my mother even before the end of the war after she had lost her husband. The Nazi time was over for her.<sup>126</sup>

By undertaking a simple count method, we can see that while Jewish survivors told stories that conveyed the horror of what happened to them under the rule of the Nazi dictatorship, they also frequently indicated that the 'ordinary' Germans they encountered were not always unkind, rejecting or supportive of the regime's actions. More often than not, the samples looked at here indicate that they told stories of kindness and encouragement. We cannot prove anything about the actions of the people from this method, but we can confidently state that the assertions of historians are, at the very least, misleading because they have relied on general statements and randomly selected examples that they have not proven to be representative of all the evidence. Just as importantly, we can see that if systematic analysis is applied to the study of personal narratives, it has the potential to give us further insight into what happened in relationships between Jews and non-Jews in the Third Reich.

The samples of personal narratives examined in this chapter are flawed because of their smallness and the process of selectivity which they have undergone before being published. Yet those historians who do find it acceptable to quote from personal narratives appear to have had no qualms about using these, and other similar stories, to support their arguments. There is one primary source, frequently quoted by historians, which has fewer limitations because of the quality of the information it contains and the extent of its testimony. The 1933-1945 diaries of Victor Klemperer open a remarkable window to one man's experiences. These diaries and the ways they can be analysed are the focus of Chapter Three.

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<sup>124</sup> Avraham Barkai, 'The German *Volksgemeinschaft* from the Persecution of the Jews to the 'Final Solution'', in *Confronting the Nazi Past: New Debates on Modern German History*, ed. Michael Burleigh (New York, 1996), p. 95.

<sup>125</sup> For examples of how all types of relationships were placed under strain, see Anonymous, *A Woman in Berlin: Eight Weeks in the Conquered City* (New York, 2005).

<sup>126</sup> Jewish female, 20, Hamburg in Crane, *Divided Lives*, p. 206.

## Chapter Three

### The Diaries of Victor Klemperer

Since they were first published in 1995, the diaries of Victor Klemperer have arguably become the single most frequently quoted personal testimony, written from a victim's perspective, which has emerged from the Nazi era.<sup>1</sup> Many historians quote from Klemperer's diaries to support their interpretation of the relationship between Jewish and non-Jewish Germans under the Third Reich. The key question of this chapter is whether Klemperer actually says what historians claim that he says. To this end, I shall analyse systematically both the text of Klemperer's diary and the uses to which the diary has been put in the secondary literature.

The reason why Klemperer has attracted so much scholarly attention is related to underlying trends in the historiography of Nazi Germany. In the early post-war years, historians had promoted the view that a totalitarian National Socialist regime had imposed its will, top-down, on Germany's citizens.<sup>2</sup> Eventually theories of *Polykratie* and 'broadly diffused societal complicity' emerged, which led to a shift in focus away from the power structures and activities of the regime to social-historical examinations of the 'ordinary people' in Germany. In this context, Klemperer's diaries provided a unique window for scholars interested in viewing society from a 'bottom-up' approach. Klemperer's comprehensive and even expert viewpoint made him well equipped to comment on the society in which he lived. He was not representative of the powerful elements of his society, but lived and moved among the 'ordinary' people. Because his diaries were articulate and detailed, they have proven to be an invaluable resource for historians interested in the sections of society who generally leave less of an imprint behind them than those who belong to the structures of power.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Victor Klemperer, *Ich will Zeugnis ablegen bis zum letzten: Tagebücher 1933-1945*, Vol. I-II (Berlin, 1995). The English translations mostly used here are: Victor Klemperer, *I Shall Bear Witness: The Diaries of Victor Klemperer 1933-41* (London, 1998), and Victor Klemperer, *I Will Bear Witness: A Diary of the Nazi Years 1942-1945* (New York, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> Geoff Eley, 'Hitler's Silent Majority? Conformity and Resistance under the Third Reich' (Part One), *Michigan Quarterly Review*, 42:2 (2003), p. 391.

<sup>3</sup> See Miles Fairburn, *Social History: Problems, Strategies and Methods* (New York, 1999), p. 204.

Klemperer's diaries quickly reached bestseller status and historians have since found them a valuable source of new information.<sup>4</sup> Steven Aschheim says: 'These diaries constitute perhaps the most intricately detailed, sharply perceptive and painfully wrought chronicles of everyday life in the Third Reich (at least from the viewpoint of its victims) that we possess.'<sup>5</sup> Henry Turner writes: 'By far the most important German diary of the century for social history, it will long remain an indispensable source of information for anyone seriously interested in understanding modern Germany.'<sup>6</sup> Walter Laqueur finds them 'worth whole libraries' as a source of conveying what it was like to be a victim of the Third Reich.<sup>7</sup>

While scholars are enthusiastic about Klemperer's diaries as an historical source, they also express anxiety about why they have attracted so much interest from the general public, particularly in Germany. A number of historians claim that non-academic readers misunderstand or misuse the diaries as they take quotations out of context in order to prove that 'ordinary Germans' did not, after all, treat Jews so badly. For example, Susanne Heim believes that German readers want to locate exoneration in some sort of mirror Klemperer held up to them.<sup>8</sup> Heim herself finds no such absolution in the diaries. Instead, she claims, the frequent emphasis made by reviewers regarding the positive aspects of Klemperer's interactions with 'Aryans' are proof of distortion of perception. It is not the mirror which is faulty, but the viewpoint of the observer. Likewise, Omer Bartov repeatedly warns scholars who might be tempted to find anything in Klemperer other than German complicity with the Nazi regime. He claims that only highly selective reading of the text will find anything other than society turning against the Jews, and 'tendentious historians' will find the diaries useless because of Klemperer's vacillations; his diaries cannot serve to provide an apology for 'ordinary Germans' in the Third Reich.'<sup>9</sup> Although this begs the question of why historians feel the need to issue these warnings, and whether or not Heim,

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<sup>4</sup> Peter Gay, 'Inside the Third Reich', *New York Times*, 22 November 1998, p. BR15. See also Hans Reiss, 'Victor Klemperer (1881-1960): Reflections on His 'Third Reich' Diaries', *German Life and Letters*, 51:1 (1998), p. 66.

<sup>5</sup> Steven Aschheim, 'Comrade Klemperer: Communism, Liberalism and Jewishness in the DDR. The Later Diaries 1945-59', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 36: 2 (2001), p. 325.

<sup>6</sup> Henry Turner, 'Victor Klemperer's Holocaust', *German Studies Review*, 22: 3 (1999), p. 385. See also Robert Gellately, *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany* (Oxford, 2001), p. 340.

<sup>7</sup> Walter Laqueur, 'Three Witnesses: The Legacy of Viktor Klemperer, Willy Cohn, and Richard Koch', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 10:3 (1996), p. 261.

<sup>8</sup> Susanne Heim, 'The German-Jewish Relationship in the Diaries of Victor Klemperer' in *Probing the Depths of German Antisemitism*, ed. D. Bankier (New York, 2000), pp. 312, 325.

<sup>9</sup> Omer Bartov, *Germany's War and the Holocaust: Disputed Histories* (Ithaca, N.Y., 2003), pp. 197 and 199-200.

Bartov and others are right, Klemperer's diaries are a rich source not yet fully mined for the wealth of information they contain.

## Being Klemperer

Before ascertaining what insights can be elicited from the diaries, it is important to establish Klemperer's credentials as a competent witness. As a professor of literature, he certainly possessed training and skills beyond those of many writers. His dismissal from his university post in 1935, calamitous though it was for him, probably served him well by freeing him to devote greater amounts of time to the writings that we now access.<sup>10</sup>

Because he was married to an 'Aryan' he was afforded a measure of protection from the worst of the regime's excesses, giving us, unusually, a full personal testimony from the beginning to the very end of the regime. Even the fateful bombing of Dresden, which came just as he was about to receive his deportation order, gave him opportunity to escape in the ensuing mêlée. This served to assist his capacity to present a complete testimony; many other personal narratives are cut short by death or exile.

In addition to his fortuitous circumstances, the quality of the text makes it a highly valuable resource.<sup>11</sup> No reviewer could do less than accept Klemperer's writing was meticulous, observant and frequently astute, faithful in recording even the smallest of details, honest and unhesitating to expose even his own weaknesses or failings. His determination to provide an accurate record is evident from many remarks he made about his task: 'I will bear witness, precise witness!' and 'I find it difficult to report everything in chronological order.'<sup>12</sup> At other times he commented: 'The changing details of everyday life are precisely what is most important,' and 'I want to go on observing, taking notes, studying until the last moment.'<sup>13</sup> Even knowledge of the risks he exposed others to was

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<sup>10</sup> While working as a forced labourer, he would get up at 3.30 every morning to record the previous day's events. Victor Klemperer, *The Language of the Third Reich* (London, 2006), p. 265.

<sup>11</sup> The original diaries, comprising 5,000 pages, are held in the Saechsische Landesbibliothek, Dresden. The editor of the German editions, Walter Nowojski, notes in an appendix to the 1997 edition that he has made some cuts to the original text, mostly where there were multiple repetitions or Klemperer reproduced extracts from the press. Difficulties deciphering handwriting were overcome with the assistance of Klemperer's widow, his second wife Hadwig. Rolf Dencker, <http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx=vx&list=h-german&month=9903&week=b&msg=3OlfeWA3c/3HzDSd/svMIw&user=&pw>, 28 Sept. 2008. Further cuts were made for the English translation, again mostly for reasons of repetition. Martin Chalmers, 'Introduction' in Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. xxi.

<sup>12</sup> 27 May 1942, 29 May 1942. Klemperer, *Diary 1942-1945*, p. 61.

<sup>13</sup> 10 December 1940, 21 July 1944. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 348, and Victor Klemperer, *Diary 1942-1945*, p. 337.

not enough to deter him: ‘Eva [his wife] said I must not mention *any name*, must not put anyone at risk. Right—but how could I keep a precise record without names?’<sup>14</sup> This exacting approach gives the text not only coherence but credibility.

Klemperer’s motives for writing are also relevant to interpretation of the text. Translator Martin Chalmers comments that Klemperer’s diaries were not intended for publication.<sup>15</sup> Omer Bartov agrees, believing the diaries were ‘written only for himself.’<sup>16</sup> Klemperer himself, however, seems to provide evidence contradicting these statements. He had been a prolific diarist in youthful adulthood, but early in the Nazi regime, he noted the shaping of an additional purpose for his daily record.<sup>17</sup> He developed the determination to bear precise witness ‘to the very end’ and despite dread of being caught or that his efforts might be wasted, he viewed his writing as his duty, life calling, and his own personal heroism.<sup>18</sup> Less than a month after his return home after the collapse of the Nazi regime, he offered his diaries to a publisher and in subsequent entries over the next few months, agonized over how he was going to prepare the material for publication.<sup>19</sup> When asked by an acquaintance to explain why he focused on everyday minutiae rather than on wider political developments, he replied: “It’s not the big things that are important to me, but the everyday life of tyranny, which gets forgotten. A thousand mosquito bites are worse than a blow to the head. I observe, note down the mosquito bites.”<sup>20</sup> Throughout the diaries he makes it clear that his intent was to inform others, even though he frequently indicated that he himself did not expect to survive the Nazi period. To ensure the survival of his documents, he had them regularly smuggled away for safe-keeping, a few pages at a time. It seems he wanted to create a testimony intended for a memorial: comprehensive and public.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>14</sup> 29 January 1945. Klemperer, *Diary 1942-1945*, p. 398.

<sup>15</sup> Chalmers, ‘Introduction’ in Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. xx.

<sup>16</sup> Bartov, *Disputed Histories*, p. 196.

<sup>17</sup> 19 August 1933. ‘From now on I want always to note briefly what occurs to me in relation to my memoirs.’ Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 29.

<sup>18</sup> 8 February 1942, 27 May 1942, 11 June 1942. Klemperer, *Diary 1942-1945*, pp. 12, 61, 75.

<sup>19</sup> 23 June 1945. Victor Klemperer, *The Lesser Evil: The Diaries of Victor Klemperer 1945-59* (London, 2003), p. 12. By 1957, when *LTI: Lingua Tertii Imperii* was published, he no longer had intent to publish the diaries. Klemperer, *Language*, p. 9. In fact, the diaries were not actually published until long after Klemperer’s death, possibly because he lived in East Germany under the Soviet system and the diaries make many derogatory comments about communism.

<sup>20</sup> 8 April, 1944, Klemperer, *Diary 1942-1945*, pp. 307-308.

<sup>21</sup> For pertinent remarks on the distinctive feature which separates Holocaust diaries from other diaries - the consciousness of belonging to and being accountable to a communal ordeal - see David Patterson *Along the Edge of Annihilation: The Collapse and Recovery of Life in the Holocaust Diary* (Seattle, 1999), pp. 21-22. Patterson believes this imparts a ‘spirit of testimony’ to diaries written by Jews. We cannot know what



While accuracy and detail were Klemperer's concern, immediacy was his advantage. Klemperer mostly recorded events on the very day that they occurred, making questions about distortion of memories immaterial. Additionally, he was unable to cross-reference or contaminate text with later alterations because of his regular despatch of pages into hiding. There are, however, many gaps in the diaries, sometimes up to two weeks in length. In subsequent entries after such gaps, Klemperer often provides explanations and summarises events, recording incidents or conversations which had occurred during the interval.<sup>22</sup> This means that although we clearly do not possess a record of every single day, we can assume that Klemperer was likely to have recorded any event or experience that he considered to be of significance.

Understanding Klemperer's character is fundamental to the interpretation of his text. Michael Burleigh remarks that value judgments about personalities are often missing from academic accounts. In Burleigh's view, such judgments, although subjective, are important.<sup>23</sup> In Klemperer's case, commentators have not been slow to point out some of his outstanding personality characteristics. His translator lists traits of disarming honesty, directness, cantankerousness, suspicion, hypochondria and bad temper, which seem to resonate with most commentators, who sometimes add their own descriptions: 'neurotic', 'petty', 'frustrated', 'prickly', 'problematic personality', and 'fussy, vulnerable and idiosyncratic'.<sup>24</sup> For the most part, however, historians list these traits but make no comment on their implication for our interpretation of Klemperer's text. Historians tend to focus on the information offered in the text without integrating understanding of Klemperer's personality into their interpretation.

Klemperer himself was extraordinarily candid in his self-analysis, given that he expected one day the diaries might be read by others. He made no attempt to hide his flaws. For

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Klemperer would think of this theory, given he wanted to be German more than he wanted to be Jewish. But his firm resolve to bear witness gives credence to the possibility that he had an instinctive desire to represent the plight of the Jews through his testimony.

<sup>22</sup> For example, 19 October 1935. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, pp. 130-131. Material included in the original German publication but edited out for the English translation is justified by the translator in the Introduction (p. xxi). For the most part these omitted passages bear no relevance to the argument of this thesis, but on the rare occasion that useful material exists within the omissions, the German-language edition is referenced.

<sup>23</sup> Michael Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History* (London, 2000), p. 931.

<sup>24</sup> Chalmers, 'Introduction' in Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. xx; Saul Friedländer, *The Years of Extermination: Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1939-1945* (New York, 2008), p. 64; Heim, p. 313; Aschheim, pp. 325, 326; and Gay, 'Inside the Third Reich', p. BR15.

instance, he regularly recorded, in somewhat comical fashion, his habit of stealing food from his neighbour.<sup>25</sup> He was aware of his predilection towards pessimism in his writing. He told his second wife, Hadwig: “Ordinarily I am quite happy. But when I write I am sad ‘til death. Maybe because when you write you begin to think over it all, and you hunch over as you write and, alors, you begin to be a pessimist.”<sup>26</sup> Ultimately he was unconcerned about how he presented:

Day and night (literally) I am dogged by thoughts of death and futility . . . .Only [the regime’s] ending will show how I have spent the last part of my life, whether I shall be considered irresponsibly indolent and unprincipled or tenacious and self-assured or whether nobody will give a hoot, myself included. This last statement is 99 per cent likely.<sup>27</sup>

Unawares, Klemperer revealed other important aspects of his personality. The key element of his character, which bears crucially on meaning in his text, appears mostly as a descriptor, passed over without scholarly recognition of the potential impact on the historical record. Peter Gay writes: ‘He exploited his flaws - his pedantry, obstinacy, self-involvement - to make a masterpiece.’<sup>28</sup> But Gay does not further explore the significance Klemperer’s self-involvement to discern just how essential it is to interpretation of the diaries.

This self-involvement made Klemperer selfish, avowedly cold-hearted, hypochondriac, inordinately fearful of imminent death and careless in his relations with others. These qualities were not solely the consequence of Nazi pressures. Klemperer demonstrated the same tendencies in both his pre- and post- regime diaries.<sup>29</sup> He knowingly placed others at risk and often revealed awareness of the dangers he brought to himself and others: ‘This scribbling, this manuscript in the house is undoubtedly a constant risk to my life—and also to some mentioned in it.’<sup>30</sup> His lack of compassion for others troubled him sometimes:

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<sup>25</sup> 16 March 1942, 24 March 1942, 6 June 1942, 26 June 1942, 20 July 1942, 10 August 1942, 16 August 1942. Klemperer, *Diary 1942-1945*, pp. 29, 31, 68, 87, 104, 120, 123.

<sup>26</sup> Paula Weideger, *Financial Times*, 21 February 2004, [www.j-bradford-delong.net/movable\\_type/refs/Safari\\_Scrapbook3/Klemperer%20FT.html](http://www.j-bradford-delong.net/movable_type/refs/Safari_Scrapbook3/Klemperer%20FT.html)

<sup>27</sup> 14 October 1940. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 343.

<sup>28</sup> Gay, ‘Inside the Third Reich’, p. BR16.

<sup>29</sup> For example: ‘Trude Öhlmann is without any doubt whatsoever at death’s door . . . .Once again this wasting away leaves me terribly cold. And again, as so often in recent years, this hideous sense of triumph: I am 12 years older and will go on living. And always this mixture of indifference and dull fear: when will it be my turn?’ 31 October 1948. Klemperer, *Diaries 1945-59*, p. 270.

<sup>30</sup> 5 April 1943, also see 24 June 1942, 27 September 1944. Klemperer, *Diary 1942-1945*, p. 212, 85, 364. Instances of identifying people and their anti-Nazi activities or sentiments are too numerous to record here,

‘When I woke up early this morning I thought with dismay of my own coldness of heart.’<sup>31</sup> He often lacked gratitude towards the many people who helped him and tended to dismiss them from memory once they were of no further use to him.<sup>32</sup> One example of his lack of empathy was his response to the fate of property agent Helmut Richter, who often proved his support for Klemperer by slipping him provisions, making arrangements to assist him to retain ownership of his house against the regime’s efforts to dislodge him, and offering a hiding place if revolution should break out. Klemperer deduced Richter was involved in a conspiracy to overthrow the Nazis and had no hesitation in recording the information the man imprudently passed on to him.<sup>33</sup> When Richter was arrested, the pity Klemperer felt for him was ‘odiously blunted’:

My very first reaction was to be almost quietly pleased or amused, that my protector and guardian was now worse off than myself, that Aryans, too, were personally experiencing the hand of the tyranny . . . But then I was tormented by what his arrest meant for us. Loss of bread coupons, loss of extra money . . . the house in great danger, for who will be the next trustee? <sup>34</sup>

The reason it is essential to understand Klemperer’s personality is that it can make a significant difference to analysis of his diaries. Failure to comprehend his character means we are likely to misinterpret meaning in the text. This has particular significance when his diaries are used as evidence by historians interested in the question of relations between Jewish and non-Jewish Germans under the Third Reich.<sup>35</sup>

As we saw in Chapter One of this dissertation, there is a general (though not unchallenged) consensus amongst historians that non-Jewish Germans showed little concern for the plight of their Jewish compatriots. Such historians generally believe that the testimony supplied by Klemperer supports their pessimistic assessment of the behaviour and attitudes of ‘ordinary Germans’. Omer Bartov, for instance, describes ‘the “good Germans” who increasingly abandon him.’<sup>36</sup> Susanne Heim also comments on: ‘the silent withdrawal of

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but for example, he details the activities of two named Quakers who were covertly assisting Jews: 3 December 1938, 15 December 1938, and 31 December 1938. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, pp. 266, 269, 273.

<sup>31</sup> 27 September 1936. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 182.

<sup>32</sup> When the most trustworthy of their friends, Annemarie Köhler, died of lung cancer in 1948, Klemperer wrote: ‘[The news] did and then again did not shake us. For us she had long ago become lifeless and virtually dead.’ 23 September 1948. Klemperer, *Diaries 1945-59*, pp. 266.

<sup>33</sup> 14 February 1943, 1 May 1943. Klemperer, *Diary 1942-1945*, pp. 199-201, 222.

<sup>34</sup> 27 June 1943. Klemperer, *Diary 1942-1945*, pp. 241-242. Richter was eventually sent to Buchenwald and died as the result of his experiences there. Klemperer, *Diaries 1945-59*, pp. 550-551.

<sup>35</sup> Turner, ‘Victor Klemperer’s Holocaust’, pp. 387-388.

<sup>36</sup> Bartov, *Disputed Histories*, p. 197.

acquaintances and colleagues and his gradual isolation, which seems to have hurt him more than the government-ordered harassment.<sup>37</sup>

At first glance it seems logical to fit Klemperer into the perceived pattern of abandonment of the Jews by the 'ordinary' citizens of Germany. After all, Klemperer often talks of his feelings of isolation and abandonment with pained exclamations such as: 'Our terrible abandonment by all friends.'<sup>38</sup> For two reasons, however, his complaints should not necessarily be taken at face value and should always be contextualised.

Firstly, Klemperer's comments must be placed in context because he was sometimes mistaken in his assessments of presumed abandonment. On 8 May 1940 he recorded his thoughts about his friend Annemarie:

I have to see that I get some money from Annemarie Köhler. I had wanted to break with her completely, since she has not been here since autumn (pleaded heart trouble, as if she had not taken a taxi before); I can no longer afford to be sensitive.<sup>39</sup>

The next day, he re-thought his original opinion:

Cordially received by Annemarie, who with her puffy face really does look ailing. Perhaps her staying away really was not intended as a slight to us.<sup>40</sup>

Two months later, Klemperer discovered the extent of her illness:

Annemarie . . . much and very depressingly changed. Swollen face, both eyes infected like a bulldog's, constant cough. She evidently has serious heart disease.<sup>41</sup>

In spite of this, in a fit of post-birthday depression, he seems to have forgotten her circumstances and lumped her in with others who he felt had abandoned him:

On the 9<sup>th</sup> I became aware not only of my age, but also of my terrible isolation. Cool lines from Annemarie Köhler, who has not come to see us for at least one and a half years. Johannes Köhler, Fräulein Carlo, my former colleagues – where are they? 'When all become unfaithful', one would need to believe in a bon dieu.<sup>42</sup>

He continued to question Annemarie's loyalty into the following year:

At Annemarie's . . . .With heavy heart – she has not come to see us for two years. Fear? Disloyalty? – But she was completely unaffected, warm, passionately anti [Nazi] . . . .She

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<sup>37</sup> Heim, p. 321.

<sup>38</sup> 14 September 1936. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 182.

<sup>39</sup> 8 May 1940. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 320.

<sup>40</sup> 9 May 1940. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 322.

<sup>41</sup> 26 July 1940. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 335.

<sup>42</sup> 14 October 1940. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 343.

really cannot get away, . . . all the work of the clinic is on her shoulders, also she has serious heart problems. (She has an unnaturally thick, swollen head, a constant dry cough).<sup>43</sup>

Clearly there were extenuating circumstances to explain Annemarie's lack of contact and Klemperer either forgot or ignored them as he continued to question her loyalty. A cursory or unsystematic analysis of the diaries could easily miss the point that at least some instances of perceived abandonment in fact have other explanations.

Secondly, it is important to contextualise Klemperer's comments in light of his personality, which allowed frequent vacillations between angry despair and consoling hope. He often made statements which contradicted views that he had expressed earlier when in a different mood. We have to assess whether his comments were the product of momentary despair or a reflection of his actual and thoughtful opinion. In other words, we need to establish whether Klemperer's comments about abandonment are typical and representative of his evidence overall. When one analyses the text systematically, it becomes apparent that his references to abandonment are usually more the result of the specific circumstances of the time than of a deep-seated and considered opinion.

Omer Bartov's choice is to take Klemperer's comments at face value, as evidence of how Klemperer was abandoned by his non-Jewish friends and colleagues. Bartov writes: 'By December 1936, as his telephone line is cut, and his housekeeper is no longer allowed to work for him, and his friends are either in exile or with the Nazis, Klemperer acknowledges that he is "completely alone, absolutely alone."'<sup>44</sup> But Bartov makes no attempt to contextualise Klemperer's comment, or systematically evaluate whether, on the basis of this quotation, it is legitimate to conclude that Klemperer really had been abandoned. A brief survey of the six month period before this diary entry will allow us to determine how Klemperer's feelings of isolation were supported by his actual experiences.

On 9 June 1936, Klemperer received a visitor: 'On Thursday the young Köhlers came to us in tears. His mother has died . . . His father faces instant dismissal if they associate with us.' Klemperer noted Köhler's 'conflict of conscience, tears of nervous exhaustion' and

<sup>43</sup> 21 May 1941. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 368.

<sup>44</sup> Bartov, *Disputed Histories*, p. 206. Diary entry: 8 December 1936. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 193.

wrote: 'I cannot find it in myself to blame their Johannes so very much.'<sup>45</sup> To avoid placing the family at risk, Klemperer sent a wreath and condolence letter instead of attending the funeral in person. At the time, Klemperer uncharacteristically seemed to hold no hard feelings against Johannes, but was irked by the subsequent lack of contact when thenceforth young Köhler failed to send his usual birthday, Christmas or New Year's greetings. Klemperer apparently never had contact with him again.<sup>46</sup> Johannes' widowed father, who faced dismissal from his job as a railway inspector, did however risk a 'thank you' visit for the expressions of sympathy later in June, albeit under cover of darkness.<sup>47</sup> In the six months between young Köhler's visit and the date of Bartov's quote, Klemperer made thirty-six diary entries, with his 'terrible abandonment by all friends' comment appearing roughly in the middle (14 September 1936). In that period, he recorded receiving or making social visits thirty-five times. He was visited in his home thirteen times by non-Jewish Germans, made two visits to the homes of non-Jews and was contacted twice by (other) non-Jews asking if they could pay a visit. In the same period he also received visits from Jewish friends, relatives or non-Germans (Italian) twelve times and made visits out to Jews six times, including two funerals. The totals show that he had social contact with various 'Aryans' seventeen times and with Jews eighteen times in this 'lonely' period. At the same time he was out and about substantially more than previously because of frequent excursions he and Eva made in their newly acquired car.<sup>48</sup> Klemperer was no doubt being entirely sincere when, on 8 December, he complained that he felt 'completely alone, absolutely alone'. But it is more likely that his misery at this time was precipitated by the illness he had suffered in the previous days, his dire financial situation, and by the fact that his phone had been cut off. Bartov is mistaken to assume that Klemperer's comment was an accurate reflection of his social situation. Here sits no supporting proof of 'terrible abandonment by all friends'.

In general, to what use have historians put Klemperer's diaries? Some use them in a descriptive sense, helping to build their narrative without specific analysis of the text. For an example (previously noted), Richard Evans mentions Klemperer's responses to the new *Autobahn* in the context of discussing new developments in German technology under the

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<sup>45</sup> 9 June 1936. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 161.

<sup>46</sup> 28 December 1937, 8 January 1938. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, pp. 233, 237. Johannes Köhler is never mentioned again in any subsequent diary entries.

<sup>47</sup> 26 June 1936. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 164.

<sup>48</sup> 6 March 1936. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 148.

Nazis.<sup>49</sup> Others use his text by analysing and interpreting it to support their arguments, most typically in discussion of the behaviour of 'ordinary' Germans towards outcasts. An article in *Commentary* magazine by journalist and historian Daniel Johnson makes no pretensions to being a scholarly investigation but is worth mentioning here because of the sentiments he expresses which resonate with those of many historians.<sup>50</sup> He begins his discussion by saying:

Klemperer's tribulations, recorded in minute detail, make unmistakably clear just how badly most ordinary Germans of the 30's and 40's did in fact treat their Jewish neighbors.<sup>51</sup>

Furthermore:

It is true that he mentions occasional acts of generosity to Jews by individual Germans, but these acts were rare and seldom involved serious risk. They were far outweighed by the instances of petty cruelty, especially from those in any position of authority.<sup>52</sup>

His final conclusions on the diaries are not surprising:

Klemperer bears witness, alas, not to the decency of most ordinary Germans, but to their moral cowardice.<sup>53</sup>

His parting shots are aimed at twenty-first century Germans:

Typical of the German mindset is the unwillingness, or refusal, to take cognizance of certain uncongenial interpretations of the past . . . . A closer reading of the Klemperer diaries would cure [readers] of any illusions about what wartime Germans knew or wanted concerning the Jews. But no such closer reading is likely to take place, and for reasons the diaries themselves make clear. Truly to immerse oneself in this modern classic is to find oneself wondering, and not for the first time, whether the mentality of national self-deception and willful ignorance that it so brilliantly depicts will ever, like the ideology of National Socialism, fade into history.<sup>54</sup>

Johnson barely bothers to present evidence to support his claims, which is disturbing because of the degree of exposure they receive by being published in a magazine with wide readership. But more disturbing is the way some academic scholars have arrived at similar conclusions by using Klemperer's text in particular ways that ignore good historical method. Two such examples worth examining here come from Bartov and Heim.

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<sup>49</sup> Richard Evans, *The Third Reich in Power: How the Nazis Won over the Hearts and Minds of a Nation* (London, 2005), p. 326.

<sup>50</sup> Daniel Johnson, 'What Victor Klemperer Saw', *Commentary*, 109: 6 (2000), pp. 44-50.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

## Bartov's Klemperer

Bartov's commentary on Klemperer's diaries is found as a chapter in his book, *Germany's War and the Holocaust: Disputed Histories*, published in 2003. This work sets out to critically analyse recent literature and interpretations of Germany's war, the genocidal policies of the Nazi regime and the reconstruction of German and Jewish identities.<sup>55</sup> The chapter is a reprint of a review essay previously published in *The New Republic*.<sup>56</sup>

According to Bartov, Klemperer's diaries provide us with 'a view of German society under Nazism by the perfect insider who is rapidly transformed by the regime's ideology and its *internalization by the population* (italics mine) into the ultimate outsider.'<sup>57</sup> While Bartov's core theme is Klemperer's agonising struggle to maintain his German identity, there is also a sub-theme he wants his readers to detect:

The world that we see through Klemperer's eyes is a world in which most (though not all) Germans gradually turned their backs on the Jews, excluding them from their midst partly out of prejudice or conviction, partly out of fear and opportunism, and partly out of indifference and moral callousness.<sup>58</sup>

Only misrepresentative, highly selective reading of the text, claims Bartov, allows consideration of Klemperer as an apologist for 'ordinary Germans'.<sup>59</sup> To support his dual themes, Bartov directly or indirectly quotes Klemperer 110 times and lists a chronology of events within which Klemperer's struggle is contextualised. The picture which emerges undoubtedly indicts the ordinary people. Bartov provides no explanation of how he analysed Klemperer's text or distilled the 110 references from the diaries. Instead, it appears we are expected to trust that his selection of quotes is representative of Klemperer's text as a whole.

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<sup>55</sup> Omer Bartov, *Germany's War and the Holocaust: Disputed Histories* (Ithaca, N.Y., 2003). To note Bartov's context: Bartov is a recognised authority on warfare and genocide and this monograph on Klemperer steps slightly outside his normal area of expertise. It is possible that analysis of a diary such as Klemperer's is not familiar territory for Bartov, which provides a possible partial explanation for some of the errors he has made. However, this explanation could not serve to excuse the extent of misrepresentation discussed in this chapter.

<sup>56</sup> Omer Bartov, 'The Last German', *The New Republic*, 219:26 (Dec. 1998), pp. 34-42. In this thesis I have referenced the page numbers from the chapter in Bartov's book, but my analysis is based on the journal article because the journal arguably has wider readership and hence more opportunity for influencing opinions. The text alterations (some minor insertions) made for the book edition of the essay have no effect on my argument.

<sup>57</sup> Bartov, *Disputed Histories*, p. 196.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 197, 199, 213.



In order to ascertain whether Bartov's selection is, in fact, representative of Klemperer's diaries, it is necessary to evaluate systematically both Klemperer's text and Bartov's representation of Klemperer's text. The majority of the quotes Bartov has chosen to use reflect Klemperer's opinion or interpretation of what he observes and they can be divided into eight categories (Figure 8). Each category is assigned a value of positive, negative, or neutral according to the emotional effect on Klemperer:<sup>60</sup>

1. Klemperer's beliefs about his identity as a German.<sup>61</sup>
2. Klemperer's attempts to analyse the relationship between the Nazi regime and Germany.<sup>62</sup>
3. Klemperer's expressions of emotion or state of mind.<sup>63</sup>
4. Klemperer's appraisal of the *vox populi*: the opinions, beliefs, and 'mood' of the 'ordinary' Germans, which had a negative effect on him.<sup>64</sup>
5. Klemperer's record of the *vox populi* of Jewish acquaintances he encountered.
6. Klemperer's appraisal of the *vox populi* (of 'ordinary Germans') that had a positive effect on him.<sup>65</sup>
7. Klemperer's record of specific incidents, which had negative effect on him.
8. Klemperer's record of specific incidents, which had positive effect on him.<sup>66</sup>

The first six categories contain Bartov's references from Klemperer's diaries which are based on Klemperer's subjective assessments. The last two categories provide more 'objective' information because they describe specific incidents, not opinions. If we

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<sup>60</sup> Positive effect – providing temporary hope or uplift of the senses. Negative effect – contributing to emotions such as depression, anger, or sense of loss. Neutral – no emotional effect.

<sup>61</sup> Although they are subjective and carry negative emotional weighting, Klemperer's comments on his identity as German have been allocated neither negative nor positive status for this analysis. Rather, they are designated neutral because they tend to be more analytical than emotive.

<sup>62</sup> An example of Bartov's quotes from Klemperer which fit in this category is where Bartov writes: 'The [LTI] study was intended to demonstrate how the "completely unchecked" leaders of Nazi Germany "seek to unscrupulously stupefy a silent mass..." Bartov, *Disputed Histories*, p. 198. Klemperer: extracted from a lengthy passage describing his harrowing eight-day jail term, 20 July 1941.

<sup>63</sup> For example: "Head held high for the difficult last five minutes!" Bartov, *Disputed Histories*, p. 212. Klemperer: 31 December 1941.

<sup>64</sup> For example, Bartov quotes him saying: "Hitlerism is after all more deeply and firmly rooted in the nation and corresponds more to the German nature than I would like to admit." Bartov, *Disputed Histories*, pp. 206-207. Klemperer: 13 July 1937. I use the term *vox populi* in the sense Klemperer used it throughout his diaries, denoting just not what the people had to say on various matters but also their beliefs and opinions as interpreted by Klemperer. See for example 15 January 1944, Klemperer, *Diary 1942-1945*, p. 289.

<sup>65</sup> For example: 'In August, [Klemperer] can still detect "not a shred of politics, no anti-Semitism," and he "cannot believe that the mood of the masses is really still behind Hitler."' Bartov, *Disputed Histories*, p. 202. Klemperer: 19 August 1933.

<sup>66</sup> For example, where a former colleague (albeit wearing a Party badge) publicly and warmly greets Klemperer. Bartov, *Disputed Histories*, p. 206. Klemperer: 20 June 1937.

tabulate Bartov's references to Klemperer across these eight categories, the results are as seen in Figure 8.

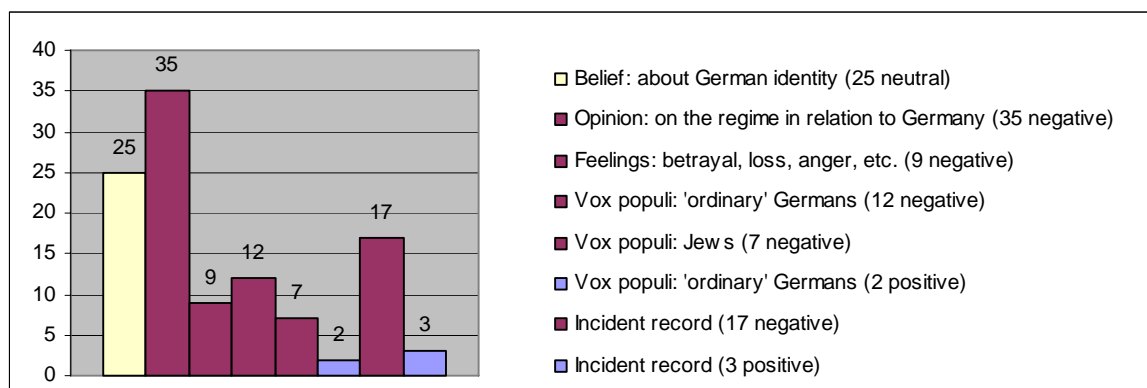


Figure 8: Klemperer as quoted by Bartov <sup>67</sup>

For the most part, Bartov builds his case upon Klemperer's subjective comments, rather than the more 'objective' data described in specific incidents. Most categories of statements quoted by Bartov are not only subjective, but also relate to depressive feelings or impressions experienced by Klemperer. In conveying Klemperer's gloomy state of mind, his fear, sense of loss, bitterness and anger, they can be designated 'negative': pessimistic, unfavourable, melancholic and characteristic of Klemperer's wretched experience of being Jewish under the Nazis. With some justification, Bartov presents Klemperer's life as generally unrelenting misery and degradation.

Taken as a whole, Bartov's 110 references from Klemperer's diaries divide into eighty 'negative' statements, five 'positive' statements, and twenty-five 'neutral' statements (Figure 9):

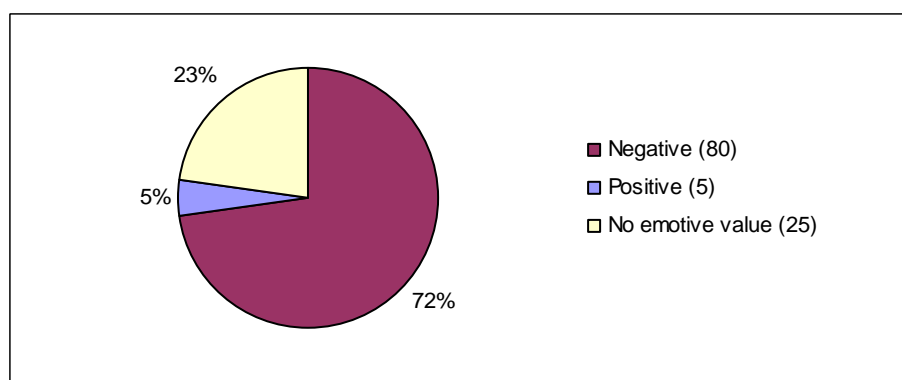


Figure 9: Experiential emotive values assigned to Bartov's Klemperer quotes

<sup>67</sup> The colours used for categories/statements in graphs throughout the thesis are: 'neutral' (ivory), 'negative' (magenta), and 'positive' (blue).

For this analysis, we are most interested in the sub-theme of Bartov's essay, which is the behaviour or attitudes of 'ordinary Germans' toward Jewish people. His main theme is Klemperer's struggle with his German identity and we can discard his twenty-five Klemperer quotes on this subject as they are not relevant to the attitudes or behaviour of people. We can also eliminate Klemperer's thirty-five comments on the Nazi regime because although the regime clearly affected all Germans, this category of quotes focuses on the actions of the authorities against Jews, for example, Klemperer's further loss of identity when he is forced to change his name to Victor-Israel, or his reception of news about the establishment of the Polish ghetto.<sup>68</sup> The nine quotes relating to Klemperer's feelings are illustrative but cannot serve as evidence of the behaviour of others. Similarly, Bartov's seven quotes related to opinions offered by Jews also do not address the behaviour of non-Jews.<sup>69</sup>

After discarding Bartov's quotes that do not deal with the attitudes and behaviours of 'ordinary' people towards the Jews, we are left with just thirty-four instances where Bartov quotes from Klemperer's diaries. Fourteen of these are Klemperer's opinion and if they were to be analysed for their contextual validity, they would necessarily have to be weighed against other statements by the diarist which suggest an opposite viewpoint. Bartov is correct to say that Klemperer vacillated, offering inconsistencies, contradictions and a whole range of emotions.<sup>70</sup> He was just as likely to say: "Hitler really was in line with the will of the German people," as 'No-one, whether inside or outside, can fathom the true mood of the people,' or 'There is no doubt that the people feel the persecution of the Jews to be a sin.'<sup>71</sup> Even if extensive analysis was applied to all instances of Klemperer's opinion throughout the diaries, the resulting picture would still reflect only his opinion: subjective and not able to be externally verified. This means that it is dangerous to build a picture based on Klemperer's opinions. They are just opinions, no more, no less.

The remaining twenty quotes in Bartov's catalogue of comments from Klemperer provide a firmer foundation for an analysis of how the people behaved toward the Jews. They are based on actual events and experience – things that actually happened to Klemperer or that

<sup>68</sup> Bartov, *Disputed Histories*, pp. 208, 209-210. Klemperer: 24 August 1938, 11 August 1940.

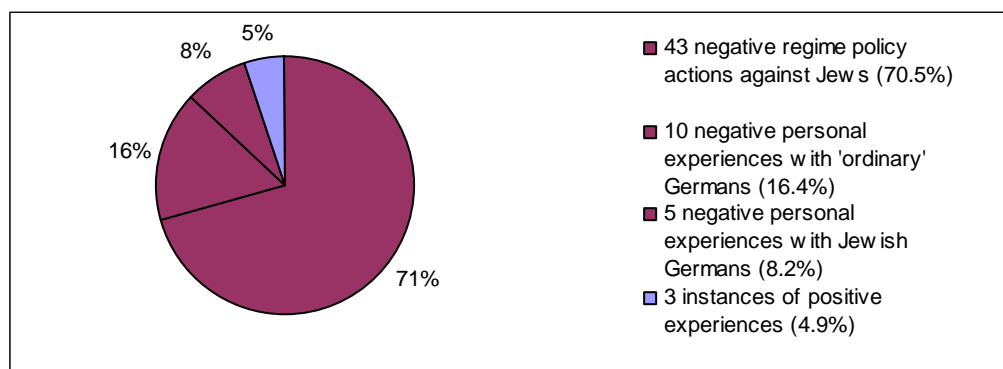
<sup>69</sup> Bartov's quotes from Klemperer that reflect the *vox populi* of Jewish acquaintances (category 5) are typically concerned with Klemperer's disgust over the attitudes of fellow-Jews who are pro-Zionist, fear communism more than Hitler, or appear to accept the disintegrating situation.

<sup>70</sup> Bartov, *Disputed Histories*, pp. 199-200.

<sup>71</sup> 10 January 1937, 22 January 1939, 4 October 1941. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, pp. 199, 281, 419.

he witnessed. Thus, they provide a more 'objective' picture of Klemperer's experiences. These references consist of seventeen negative experiences for Klemperer and three positive. This begs the question of Bartov's selection process. On what basis did he decide to note the anti-Semitic attitudes of one colleague instead of the loyalty of other colleagues or Hitler Youth abuse directed at Klemperer instead of verbal encouragement from a stranger on the street?<sup>72</sup> Does Bartov's selection of incidents reflect his own opinion on the relative proportion of positive or negative attitudes towards Jews? How representative of Klemperer's experiences are these incidents?

To provide the reader with contextual background, Bartov supplements his analysis with a chronology of actual events (as opposed to opinions) drawn from the diary from the beginning of the Nazi regime to the end of 1941. Bartov lists sixty-one events in his chronology: forty-three of which describe actions taken by the Nazi regime against the Jews in general and eighteen incidents which involve Klemperer's personal interactions (Figure 10).<sup>73</sup> Of these personal experiences, five were with Jewish Germans and thirteen involved non-Jewish Germans. Just three of these instances – 'fleeting flashes in the darkness' – suggest Klemperer also recorded some positive encounters.<sup>74</sup> Overall, as we can see from both Figures 9 and 10, Bartov gives his readers the impression that Klemperer's experience of interactions with non-Jewish Germans was overwhelmingly negative.



**Figure 10: Chronology of events listed by Bartov**

Having now constructed a picture of what Bartov claims that Klemperer says, we can now proceed to analyse what Klemperer actually does have to tell us about his relationships

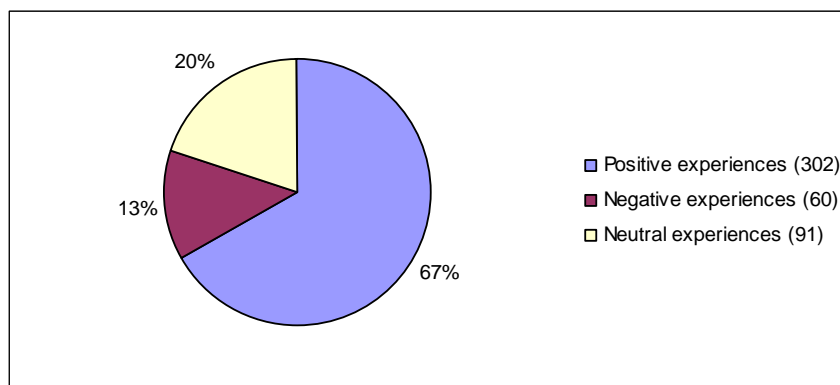
<sup>72</sup> Bartov, *Disputed Histories*, pp. 204, 212. 17 June 1934, Postscript to 1935, 1 November 1941, 16 March 1942, 19 April 1942. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, pp. 69, 137-138, 423 and *Diary 1942-1945*, pp. 41.

<sup>73</sup> The discrepancy of two events between Figure 1 and Bartov's chronology discussed here concern events Klemperer had heard of (suicides and deportations) but not personally experienced.

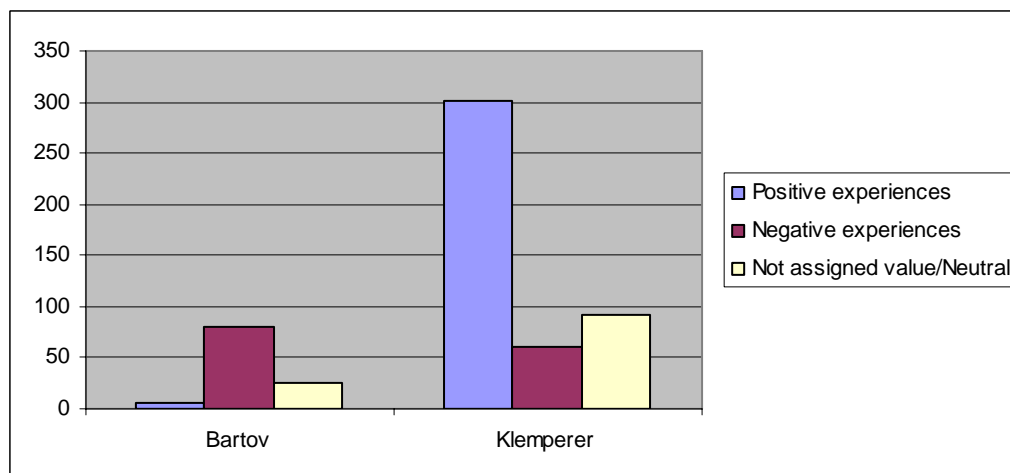
<sup>74</sup> Bartov, *Disputed Histories*, pp. 206, 209, 211.

with non-Jewish Germans. If we count every instance of reported interaction between Klemperer and non-Jewish Germans (Bartov's 'ordinary Germans'), for the entire period of the regime, a picture emerges that is very different to that provided by Bartov. A systematic analysis of Klemperer's text reveals that he recorded more 'positive' than 'negative' interactions with non-Jewish Germans (Figure 11).

The discussion which more fully explains these results occurs later in this chapter. For now, it is sufficient to note that there appears to be a substantial discrepancy between Bartov's representation of Klemperer's experiences with non-Jewish Germans and the evidence that is actually found in the diaries. Even if Bartov's notations of regime-inflicted experiences are discarded, leaving just Klemperer's notes of encounters with non-Jewish people, the negative impression proportionately outweighs the positive impression. Figure 12 shows just how much Bartov's sample of Klemperer's negative and positive experiences is proportionately different from Klemperer's actual record.



**Figure 11: Experiential values based on actual incident count in Klemperer's 1933-1945 diaries**



**Figure 12: Comparison: Bartov's sample of Klemperer's experiences/Klemperer's own account**

In an article which is chiefly focussed on Klemperer's internal struggle to maintain his German identity, how incumbent upon Bartov is it to reflect accurately the balance of Klemperer's positive and negative encounters with non-Jewish Germans? There is no disputing that life became terrible for Klemperer, as for any Jew in Germany, and the never-ending succession of measures taken against the Jews by the regime made for unmitigated misery. However, the worst of the excesses were visited upon Klemperer by the authorities and the aspects of his life which caused the most misery were the cruelties such as the brutal house searches by the Gestapo, the agony of being forced to euthanize a beloved pet, the loss of his home, and the restrictions on just about all aspects of life. The objects of Bartov's secondary theme are the 'ordinary Germans' and his assertion of how they behaved when they encountered Jews should be considered separately from the legislated ruthlessness of the authorities.

Nevertheless, Bartov has tied the actions of the regime to the guilt of the German people as a whole. The issue of whether the people behaved as bystanders, passive and indifferent, hence facilitating the behaviour of the regime, is not under discussion. Bartov has made an assertion about their *active* behaviour: non-Jewish Germans turned their backs on Jewish German Jews and excluded them from their midst.<sup>75</sup> By implication the emotional and tangible effects of the regime's behaviour are also imposed by the people.

In order to persuade the reader of his thesis, Bartov quotes selectively from Klemperer. At one point in his chronological account, Bartov writes:

In October, the reports multiply of deportations of Jews from Germany to Poland . . . . That the isolated Jews in Dresden knew about these deportations reveals once more that none of this was unknown to Germans. Indeed, Klemperer asks: "Who among the 'Aryan' Germans is really untouched by National Socialism? The contagion rages in all of them, perhaps it is not a contagion, but basic German nature." In November he is abused by some Hitler Youth in the street.<sup>76</sup>

The actual diary entries cited by Bartov read more fully:

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<sup>75</sup> A small but important distinction is necessary (discussed later in this chapter), which distinguishes between the behaviour of non-Jews and the way Jews experienced it. For example, an encounter, such as derogatory remarks about Jews on a tram, may involve classifiably 'neutral' behaviour on the part of the non-Jew because there was no element of intent toward the Jew, yet the Jew may find it a 'negative' experience because of the depressive effect on mood it causes. Conversely, a complaint on a tram about the regime (no intent towards the Jew, hence 'neutral' behaviour) may bring a temporary uplift or sense of hope to the Jew, having a positive effect.

<sup>76</sup> Bartov, *Disputed Histories*, pp. 211-212.

Ever more shocking reports about deportations of Jews to Poland. . . [details] . . . . A letter from Missy Meyerhof about it . . . [Klemperer complains about a Jewish birthday coffee afternoon where ladies exult over real coffee and cake while weeping over bad news] . . . And letters read out from Berlin, Frankfurt, Essen. – ‘This one’s aunt has hanged herself – her sister wanted to throw herself in front of a train – I had palpitations – the cakes ...’

On the same day, Klemperer reports the latest speculation circulating about the war: anticipated victory over the Soviets followed by a military coup with a new government that makes peace with England:

One who is of this opinion . . . is here again, Ludwig Voss, Kätchen’s brother-in-law . . . He abhors Hitler, but he abhors the English just as much. ‘In 1919 they forced us off the pavement with their riding whips. Servitude under Churchill would perhaps be even worse than under Hitler.’ Herr Ludwig Voss is not entirely sound after all. It gave him pleasure to put together his Proof of Ancestry. I always ask myself: Who among the ‘Aryan’ Germans is really untouched by National Socialism? The contagion rages in all of them, perhaps it is not a contagion, but basic German nature.<sup>77</sup>

When the text is considered in its entirety and context, it is possible to construct an alternate reading of Klemperer’s words. The news about these deportations was conveyed in private letters, written by victims’ relatives, which circulated in Jewish circles. There is no clear evidence that the letters were shared with the ‘Aryan’ public who did not have close contacts among the Jews. We can therefore question Bartov’s assertion that Klemperer’s comment is proof of widespread knowledge of the deportations. Klemperer’s distress over ‘contagion’ is prompted by the fact that Herr Voss enjoyed complying with Nazi demands to prove his ancestry and failed to discriminate accurately the difference between rule under Hitler or the English. For this Klemperer despises him and he transfers this scorn to all Germans. Voss was an ‘Aryan’ who openly visited a Jewish relative in the *Judenhaus*. He was clearly not participating in persecution of the Jews nor even turning his back on them. Rather, he had foolishly succumbed to elements of National Socialist ideology. Nonetheless, Bartov’s implication is that here is proof of deliberate anti-Semitic attitudes amongst the people.<sup>78</sup>

Klemperer’s experience with Hitler Youth, albeit distressing for him, takes on the appearance of childish taunting when examined in its entirety:

<sup>77</sup> 25 October 1941. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 421.

<sup>78</sup> Curiously, Friedländer uses the same passage to make the same point while contrasting public sympathy for star wearers with Klemperer’s ostensible detection of anti-Semitic attitudes. Friedländer, *Years of Extermination*, p. 253.

Was for the first time subjected to some abuse the day before yesterday. At Chemnitzer Platz a section of Hitler Youth cubs. 'A yid, a yid!' Yelling they run towards the dairy I am just entering. I can still hear them shouting and laughing outside. When I come out, they are lined up. I look calmly at their commander, not a word is spoken. Once I am past, behind me, but not called out loudly, one, two voices: 'A yid!'<sup>79</sup>

He then describes another incident two hours later where a shop employee kindly encourages him: 'It doesn't matter about the star, we're all human beings, and I know such good Jews.' Klemperer mournfully records this consolation has not cheered him much and once again, ponders which of the two incidents is the true *vox populi*. But the significant element to note is that, almost ten years into the regime, for the *first* time he experiences abuse because he is Jewish.<sup>80</sup> This remark is made after many years of official abuse. Without perhaps fully realising it, Klemperer is drawing a distinction between the Nazi regime and its subjects.

It is evident that even direct quotes can be used to convey a different impression from that conveyed in the original text if they are removed from their context or arranged in a particular order. The key point is not that Bartov is necessarily wrong to assert that there was widespread anti-Semitism among 'ordinary' Germans. It is not the purpose of this dissertation to assess the degree to which Jewish Germans were shunned by non-Jewish Germans. The key point is simply that, even if Bartov's overall conclusion is correct, the manner in which he uses the evidence from Klemperer's diaries is problematic. Bartov takes quotes out of context and creates an overall impression through selective referencing that is not representative of Klemperer's entire text.

## Heim's Klemperer

Another historian who has written at length on Victor Klemperer is Susanne Heim.<sup>81</sup> In contrast to Bartov, who saw Klemperer as the 'perfect insider', Heim refers to him as an 'outsider' neither fully anchored in his German identity or in Judaism. Nevertheless, the two historians do find common ground in their suspicion that the immense public interest

<sup>79</sup> 1 November 1941. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 423.

<sup>80</sup> Klemperer was undoubtedly identifiable as Jewish because of the Jew's star, which by this date he had worn for about six weeks. Note that the first public labelling of him as Jewish was 20 March 1938 when yellow bills with the Star of David were attached to his fence.

<sup>81</sup> Susanne Heim, 'The German-Jewish Relationship in the Diaries of Victor Klemperer' in *Probing the Depths of German Antisemitism*, ed. D. Bankier (New York, 2000).



generated by the diaries is because readers believe they provide some sort of exoneration for non-Jews accused of rejecting Jews.<sup>82</sup> Neither has found that the diaries provide such vindication. Heim in particular asserts that the error is located in the faulty perception of those vainly looking for exculpation. Throughout her essay, perception stands as a key reference point: not only addressing the perception of those seeking exoneration for German society, but also the perception of Klemperer as he bears witness and the perception of the Germans who lived under the regime. She identifies Klemperer's purpose as being to record 'every possible indication of an impending collapse of the Nazi regime'.<sup>83</sup>

Heim's own focus in examining the diaries is the relationship between Jewish and non-Jewish Germans as she questions how much support Jews received from the Germans (by whom she means non-Jewish German society distinct from the Gestapo). Her conclusion is that Jews found few people they could rely on because the Germans were engaged in 'silent complicity' with their leaders.<sup>84</sup> She asserts that the German people, even the few who were prepared to help Jews, erected 'psychic barriers' which prevented them from having to fully comprehend the troubles of the Jewish population.

Before we consider Heim's analysis, it is important to identify the context within which she operates. In 1991 she published a controversial book, co-authored with Götz Aly, which laid out the thesis that the Holocaust was shaped by a programme of economic rationalization and modernization undertaken by young technocrats. These economists, demographic planners, agriculturalists and racial theorists operated within the middle and lower ranks of the government system.<sup>85</sup> Aly and Heim's theory firmly locates the impetus for the Holocaust away from the top-ranking Nazi ideologues to those who inhabited the world of bureaucracy, in other words, 'ordinary' people. Heim's underlying viewpoint needs to be born in mind when one considers her analysis of Klemperer's diaries. She is obligated by her own hypothesis, unless she is willing to engage with the process of re-

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<sup>82</sup> Bartov, *Disputed Histories*, p. 199, and Heim, pp. 312-313, 325.

<sup>83</sup> Heim, p. 315.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 321.

<sup>85</sup> Götz Aly and Susanne Heim, *Vordenker der Vernichtung: Auschwitz und die deutschen Pläne für eine neue europäische Ordnung* (Hamburg, 1991). Later translated and published as *Architects of Annihilation: Auschwitz and the Logic of Destruction* (London, 2002). Parts of the translated book were edited and some text omitted, but the original thesis remained the same.

assessment, to take a particular stance – one which establishes the guilt of the ordinary people.

Heim initially validates Klemperer as a witness. She describes his ‘meticulousness’ and ‘virtually obsessive desire to bear witness’ where his ‘painstaking attention to detail . . . comes to represent Klemperer’s unusual perceptiveness, a balance between proximity and distance from his object.’<sup>86</sup> But she then issues a warning: Klemperer was not a neutral chronicler and therefore the value of his testimony as a historical source is undermined. This, she claims, is because two predispositions led him to overestimate any indications that helped to sustain his feelings.<sup>87</sup> These predispositions were his desperate search for clues that the regime might be coming to an end and his need to defend his own German identity. In this neediness, Klemperer ‘repeatedly pinned his hopes on indications that Germans did not generally agree with Nazi policies.’ In this, Heim believes, he was disappointed: he was forced to acknowledge a general lack of interest in the fate of the Jews and secret support for anti-Jewish policies.<sup>88</sup>

In this manner Heim establishes a hierarchy of significance which has considerable impact on the way she reads Klemperer’s text. Klemperer the perceptive and careful witness is nonetheless compromised by his overestimation of ‘positive’ experiences with non-Jews. While any scholarly analysis necessarily involves establishing criteria for interpretation and providing reference points to orient the reader, Heim in effect asks of her readers that they apply two different kinds of analysis. Anything that indicates the Germans did not support Hitler must be passed through a filter to sift out Klemperer’s faulty perception. But no such filter is suggested for incidents where Klemperer had a negative encounter; it appears these are to be taken at face value. Heim’s implication therefore is that the negative encounters he experienced must outweigh considerations of the positive encounters. Not only is Klemperer devalued as an effective witness, but Heim insists that criticism of Nazism or expressions of sympathy for Jews must necessarily carry less weight.

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<sup>86</sup> Heim, ‘Diaries’, p. 313.

<sup>87</sup> Heim, p. 316. Heim does not clearly establish either of these two predispositions, but it is not relevant to my central argument to extensively analyse this failure here.

<sup>88</sup> Heim, p. 320.

Heim does acknowledge instances of support for Klemperer but asks her readers to take into account a factor which changes the perspective: in view of the living conditions of the Jews, the majority of reactions appear as supplements to Gestapo terror and Klemperer's records of friendliness and sympathy only serve to demonstrate the low expectations he had of non-Jews: 'Often what he experienced as a good turn was simply the maintenance of normal behaviour.'<sup>89</sup> These were Klemperer's 'rays of hope' and hence less credible than the many behavioural patterns of 'opportunism, tactlessness, cowardice and ignorance' or even outright hatred.

There are several difficulties with the position Heim has adopted. For example, her acknowledgment that Klemperer was a careful and thorough witness is nevertheless undermined. Heim presents him as someone who, in order to meet his own emotional need, has provided a skewed view or has distorted his data. This notion contrasts oddly with his stated intention to record all details in order to bear *precise* witness. Heim's implication is that his evidence is somehow falsified. Nothing emerges from the diaries or the character of the central protagonist which indicates any likelihood of this possibility. While Klemperer had many shortcomings, he was not an unreliable witness. Furthermore Heim agrees that Klemperer wove the question 'What is the true *vox populi*?' like a thread through his notes. This was an ongoing puzzle for him and so his attention to all comments was part of his attempt to locate the true *vox populi*. This suggests he was not merely looking for confirmation of his own ideas, as Heim asserts. Rather than tendentiously locating an answer, he genuinely took care to record everything he heard in order to make an assessment of the mood of the people.

Moreover, it is questionable how Klemperer could have incorrectly interpreted behaviours of people in the descriptions of numerous incidents which stand alone with no supporting comment. For example:

Frau Reichenbach ... told us a gentleman had greeted her in a shop doorway. Had he not mistaken her for someone else? – "No, I do not know you, but you will now be greeted frequently. We are a group 'who greet the Jew's star'."<sup>90</sup>

Tuesday and Wednesday were like early spring: thaw well under way, a greenish shimmer on the trees. Three hares were playing on the snow covered field. Unfortunately, the little

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<sup>89</sup> Heim, p. 324.

<sup>90</sup> 24 November 1941. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 426.

Hitler Youths were playing in Gorbitz and followed us, jeering and shouting. Then yesterday morning, snow fell again . . . .<sup>91</sup>

In places where Klemperer does provide an interpretative element associated with an anecdote, frequently the interpretation relates to the impact on him, rather than interpreting the conduct of the other participant:

After we were dismissed [from forced labour], I walked quickly to the tram alone, taking a shortcut, Hofwiesenstrasse. An older man, probably a tradesman, came toward me. "You must be working out here?" – "Yes, clearing snow." – "You must be getting on a bit too." – "I'm sixty." – He, as he walked on, passionately to himself: "That rabble, that damned, godforsaken rabble." It was a consolation for the little Hitler Youths.<sup>92</sup>

Here Klemperer is not interpreting the behaviour of the 'Aryan' German but recording his response to it, which makes the incident difficult to fit into Heim's assertion that he attached too much significance to anti-regime comments. According to her hierarchy of significance, the incident of the Hitler Youths related earlier in the same diary entry carries more weight than the comment by the passing gentleman.

Yet another problem with Heim's argument relates to her contention about the level of fear Klemperer experienced when encountering 'ordinary' people. She discusses how 'the Jews lived in fear of open aggression and curses from anonymous passersby' and quotes an incident where 'a young man, blond and brutal-looking, shouted from his car: "You wretch, why are you still alive?"'<sup>93</sup> Heim fails to mention that Klemperer speculated his abuser might be Gestapo. Later, she reiterates her claim that Jewish people feared 'ordinary Germans':

[Jews] were afraid not only of house searches and arrests, but also of ordinary Germans. Even if they had less power than the Gestapo, one could not be sure that their hatred of Jews would be any milder. Klemperer hardly dared leave the *Judenhaus* after the introduction of the Yellow Star. But his fear increased with the years. In June 1942 he noted about a trip to the store:

This waiting in front of the store ... is especially horrible ... the whole world stared at my star. Torture — I can plan a hundred times not to pay attention, it remains a torture. And I never know when someone goes by, drives by, whether he is a member of the Gestapo, whether he will curse me, spit at me, arrest me.

<sup>91</sup> 6 March, 1942. Klemperer, *Diary 1942-1945*, p. 23.

<sup>92</sup> 6 March, 1942. Klemperer, *Diary 1942-1945*, p. 24.

<sup>93</sup> 18 April 1942. Klemperer, *Diary 1942-1945*, p. 39, and Heim, p. 317.

Later he left the house only to go to forced labour, fearing physical attack. And even then, he, like other Jews, ducked into narrow sidestreets away from the main thoroughfares, in order to avoid attacks by non-Jews.<sup>94</sup>

In the above text, Heim frames her quote from Klemperer with text to guide our interpretation of his fears. On either side of the quote, her theme is terror, not just of the Gestapo, but of the ordinary people. This makes it difficult to understand anything else from the quote sandwiched between. A comparison of Heim's text with the original quote in its entirety opens up possibilities for subtle differences in interpretation:

Yesterday we went to Kaden the greengrocer. Eva bought, I waited and afterward hauled back the 30 pounds. This waiting in front of shops, which is often my lot, is particularly horrible. There are prams; children and dogs are playing, blathering females are coming and going (all kinds of shops are close together there, butcher, greengrocer, baker, dairy, etc., etc.), and the whole world eyes my star. Torture – I can resolve a hundred times to pay no attention, it remains torture. Also I never know whether someone walking or driving past is not in the Gestapo, whether he will not insult me, spit on me, arrest me.<sup>95</sup>

The text in its entirety requires us to ask: Did Klemperer stand in front of the shop with fear that he would be attacked by the people around him, or did he stand there humiliated by the star and fearful of whether any Gestapo would appear? In order to determine whether Heim's interpretation is correct, we need to establish his context, which will give us a broader idea of how much he feared contact with the 'ordinary' people.

The incident quoted above, which Heim uses to demonstrate Klemperer's fear of non-Jewish Germans, occurred in June 1942. This was nine months after the introduction of the yellow star. During the period September 1941 to June 1942, Klemperer recorded fifty-nine encounters with non-Jewish, non-Gestapo Germans. Of particular interest for determining general attitudes are his thirty-six encounters with strangers (61 percent) as these carry no consequence within ongoing relationships and are more likely to reflect general attitudes. If we systematically assess these incidents according to the behaviour of the people involved and weigh them against Klemperer's feelings as recorded in his diary during this time, there are grounds for coming to a conclusion that differs substantially from that of Susanne Heim.

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<sup>94</sup> Heim, p. 323.

<sup>95</sup> 9 June 1942. Klemperer, *Diary 1942-1945*, p. 71.

Klemperer's agony over having to wear the yellow star comes across strongly in the diaries. On the 19 September 1941, the day of the introduction of the star, he wrote: 'I reproach myself with cowardice. Yesterday Eva wore out her feet on the pavements and must now go shopping in town and cook afterwards. Why? Because I am ashamed.'<sup>96</sup> The following day, as his wife sewed the star on his coat he confessed: 'I had a raving fit of despair.'<sup>97</sup> He later took a walk outside, waiting until it was dark. He noted how his wife accompanied other residents of the *Judenhaus* when they went out, taking their arms so that the star was covered. On 22 September he received a letter from a friend telling of sympathy for star wearers in Berlin and optimistic assurances from 'Aryan' friends that the ordeal should soon be over.<sup>98</sup> On 23 September he braved a visit to town to go shopping and noted "Nowhere a hurt – but the most wretched, bitter feeling.'<sup>99</sup> His agony of humiliation continued, but after an act of kindness from a street vendor, he commented: 'There is no doubt that the people feel the persecution of the Jews to be a sin.'<sup>100</sup> He logged his birthday: 'In normal times honours would have come to me, now I am wearing the Star of David.'<sup>101</sup> He feared the star would cause him to be refused service in some shops.<sup>102</sup> On 12 January 1942 he was detained by the Gestapo and left traumatised:

'Since then, I have taken only a very few steps in the open air, have not left this area and shall not leave it again. The business of their fabulous tyranny, brutality, mocking humiliation has taken hold of me far too much . . . I think they want to intimidate people and drive them from the streets, perhaps also nose out shopkeepers who are friendly to Jews.'<sup>103</sup>

At this point, he makes reference to official anti-Semitism, seemingly separating the regime and its people: 'It appears as if anti-Semitism is going to increase even further, partly because of the more than critical external situation, partly because the Jew's star did not meet with much approval on the part of the public.'<sup>104</sup> And then he writes:

'Two boys, perhaps twelve and six, not working class, come toward me on a narrow pavement. Tussling as they pass me, the older one catapults his brother at me and shouts out: "Jew!" – It is ever more difficult to endure all this humiliation. And always the fear of the Gestapo . . . '<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> 19 September 1941. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 415.

<sup>97</sup> 20 September 1941. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 415.

<sup>98</sup> 22 September 1941. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 416.

<sup>99</sup> 23 September 1941. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 416.

<sup>100</sup> 4 October 1941. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 419.

<sup>101</sup> 9 October 1941. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 420.

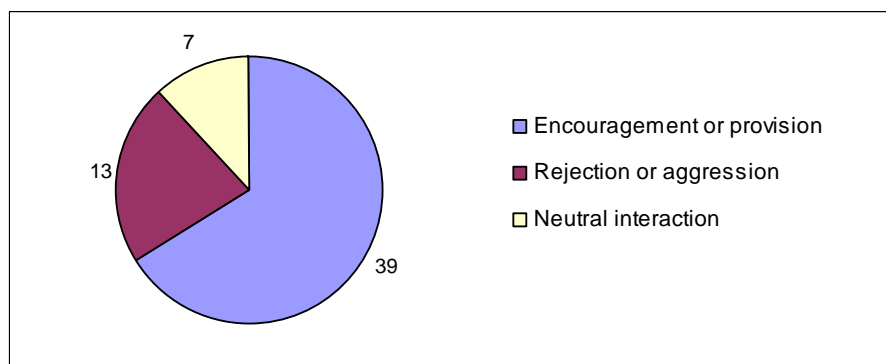
<sup>102</sup> 25 October 1941. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 421.

<sup>103</sup> 12 January 1942. Klemperer, *Diary 1942-1945*, p. 5.

<sup>104</sup> 17 January 1942. Klemperer, *Diary 1942-1945*, p. 7.

<sup>105</sup> 11 May 1942. Klemperer, *Diary 1942-1945*, p. 51.

During this period, Klemperer had developed a justifiably overwhelming fear of the Gestapo as the news of brutal house searches, soon to be experienced personally, reached him.<sup>106</sup> The overall impression from the diary entries is that he experienced great humiliation in wearing the star, worried about the effect it would have on his ability to access provisions for his life, and suffered enormous anxiety about encounters with the Gestapo. If diary entries over the previous months are to be taken as indicative of his state of mind, the ‘torture’ he refers to in Heim’s exemplar relates to the humiliation he felt when people stared at his yellow star. He was deprived of status that would allow him to enter the store with his wife, loss of status being something which he felt keenly during the Nazi years.<sup>107</sup> His dread of being insulted, spat at, and arrested stemmed from terror of the Gestapo, not the people walking past him. There is no indication that he feared the ordinary people in the way he feared the Gestapo. On the contrary, during the period September 1941 to June 1942 he recorded numerous positive encounters with non-Jewish Germans (Figure 13). The underlying methodological problem here is that Heim makes no distinction between his fear of the Gestapo and his fear of ‘ordinary’ Germans. That Klemperer was frightened of the Gestapo is beyond question. His emotions with regard to the ‘ordinary’ Germans around him seem to have been more influenced by his feelings of humiliation and loss of status.



**Figure 13: Klemperer: Encounters with non-Jews September 1941-June 1942**

Another problematic aspect of Heim’s analysis is that she qualifies gestures of help and solidarity by claiming they were disproportionate to the real situation for the Jews. She believes Klemperer ascribed such gestures more significance than was warranted and

<sup>106</sup> For example, 5 February, 8 February, 6 March, 18 April, 11 May, 23 May 1942. Klemperer, *Diary 1942-1945*, pp. 11, 12, 24, 39, 49, 56-59.

<sup>107</sup> For example: “I stood at the lectern over there [Dresden Technical University] . . . and now I’m shoveling snow here.” 22 February 1942. Klemperer, *Diary 1942-1945*, p. 19.

designates the support as ‘pitiful’.<sup>108</sup> In Heim’s view, only a few longstanding acquaintances provided support: ‘The few who actually helped the Klemperers, offering more than friendly words or handshakes, were almost exclusively (if sometimes only fleeting) acquaintances with whom they had had personal contact for years.’<sup>109</sup> In attempting to answer the question “Who would the Jews really rely on to help them?” Heim finds no more than ‘two or three such individuals in the approximately [*sic*] 1,500 pages of Klemperer’s diary.’<sup>110</sup> In reaching this gloomy conclusion Heim bolsters her argument by referencing David Bankier, who also claims that descriptions of multiple incidents of support for Jews were nothing more than ‘German exiles’ apologetics’ and that personal testimonies declaring support was given to Jews must be taken with a grain of salt.<sup>111</sup>

Systematic analysis of the diaries undermines Heim’s claim that only two or three individuals, who were exclusively long-term acquaintances, provided reliable support to the Klemperers. Between 1933 and 1945 Klemperer describes 121 instances where he was helped with provisions by non-Jews, often clandestinely and in defiance of laws against supplying Jews (See Figure 14).<sup>112</sup> Aside from the two specifically named by Heim, Annemarie Köhler and Richter the property agent, many other names occur in multiple diary entries.<sup>113</sup> Vogel the grocer was not only a rich source of political gossip for Klemperer, but generously supplied him provisions, illegally and often without charge.<sup>114</sup> Loyal friend and frequent visitor Trude Öhlmann helped Klemperer raise money by selling books for him.<sup>115</sup> Former Dresden Technical University colleague Fetscher, even after being fined for helping Jews, continued to medically treat Klemperer and repeatedly

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<sup>108</sup> Heim, p. 325.

<sup>109</sup> Heim, p. 317.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., p. 325.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., footnote 14, p. 317. The footnote refers to Bankier’s German language edition: *Die öffentliche Meinung im Hitler-Staat. Die “Endlösung” und die Deutschen, Eine Berichtigung* (Berlin, 1995), p. 164, which corresponds to the English edition used in this thesis: David Bankier, *The Germans and the Final Solution: Public Opinion under Nazism* (Oxford, 1992), p. 120, also see pp. 118 and 119. See the extended discussion of these statements by Bankier in Chapter One of this dissertation.

<sup>112</sup> 9 December 1939. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 307. A circular allocating ‘special food shops’ for Jews dated back to 13 September 1939; Klemperer was informed here that he could only be provisioned by one specified place in the city from 1 January 1940.

<sup>113</sup> Heim erroneously identifies Annemarie Köhler as ‘Annemarie Kroeger’ and Richter’s profession as ‘lawyer’ instead of property agent, p. 318. Note also that of the diary entries quoted by Heim in the footnotes, five dates are listed incorrectly: 10 May 1936, 13 February 1942, 3 December 1942, 27 April 1943, 28 May 1945, see footnotes 10, 13, 16, 19, 44 on pp. 316, 317, 318, 324.

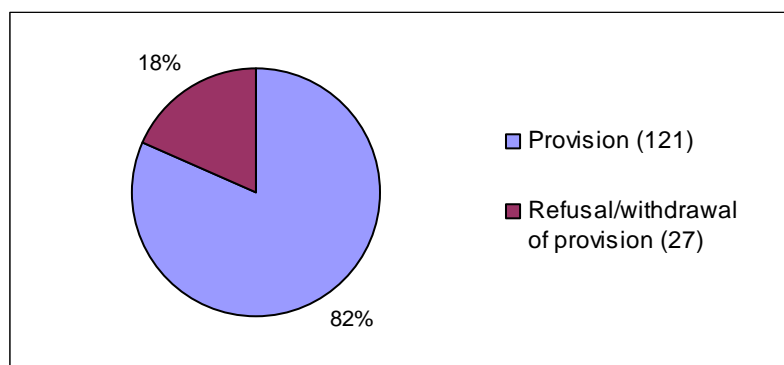
<sup>114</sup> For examples: 2 September 1938, 16 December 1939, 24 December 1939, 26 November 1940, 26 December 1940, 21 July 1941. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, pp. 255, 308, 310, 346, 349, 404.

<sup>115</sup> 24 November 1936. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p.191.



offered to hide Klemperer's papers for him.<sup>116</sup> Frau Winde, a frequent bearer of many gifts, also brought Klemperer a bicycle so that, in the event of trouble, he could flee.<sup>117</sup>

Hochgemuth, the cigar dealer, continued to supply Klemperer after the ban on smoking for Jews.<sup>118</sup> The only character in Klemperer's diaries for whom he mystifyingly, and inconsistently, appears to have used a pseudonym, Frau Ahrens ("Gertrude Schmidt") was a friend of Eva Klemperer's who often supplied food.<sup>119</sup> Maria Haeselbarth, a former student, continued to provide food and clothing, even after she suffered her own tragedy in losing her husband to the war.<sup>120</sup> Of these supporters, only Annemarie Köhler, Trude Öhlmann and Maria Haeselbarth were acquaintances from pre-Nazi days. Klemperer frequently identifies numerous other characters in his diaries who, in defiance of official laws, provided various types of tangible support, along with unnamed workmates, anonymous shopkeepers and strangers.



**Figure 14: Instances of provision vs. refusal in Klemperer's diaries 1933-1945**

The twenty-seven incidents shown in Figure 14 which involved 'refusal of provision' included eighteen times when Klemperer faced withdrawal of a previous personal or professional relationship and nine times where he was refused provisions in a shop. In most cases of withdrawal of relationship, Klemperer identified the reason as fear of regime measures if the relationship was maintained. The 121 instances of provision were all tangible: the necessities of life and practical assistance. Figure 15 shows the rate through

<sup>116</sup> 16 March 1942, 17 August 1943. Klemperer, *Diary 1942-1945*, pp. 28, 253.

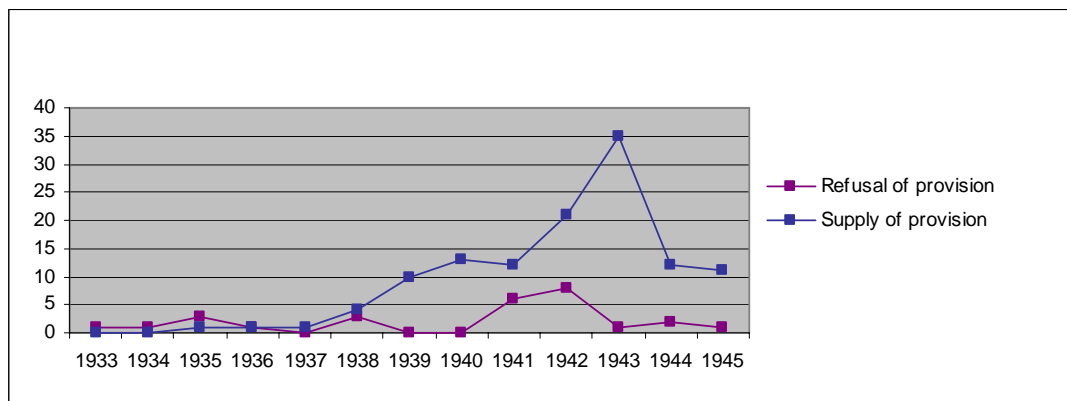
<sup>117</sup> For examples of Frau Winde: 11 July 1943, 21 July 1943, 31 August 1943, 14 September 1943, 28 September 1943, 14 November 1943, 25 December 1943, 12 February 1944, 12 March 1944. Klemperer, *Diary 1942-1945*, pp. 243, 246, 256, 258, 263, 273, 281, 295, 302.

<sup>118</sup> 10 August 1941, 15 September 1941, 8 March 1942. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, pp. 407, 411, and Klemperer, *Diary 1942-1945*, p. 25.

<sup>119</sup> 20 February 1943, 29 March 1943, 16 April 1943, 14 November 1943, 8 October 1944. Klemperer, *Diary 1942-1945*, pp. 202, 211, 214, 273, 366-367.

<sup>120</sup> 24 December 1939, 17 March 1940, 7 July 1940, 26 December 1940. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, pp. 309, 315, 331, 349.

the years of practical support contrasted with refusal or withdrawal of support. The rate of support increased markedly from the beginning of the war years, simultaneously with Klemperer's increasing need. One theoretical reason why support may have dropped off in the final two years of the war may be related to the deprivation experienced by all Germans by this time. Incidental remarks in the diaries indicate there were many other times, not specifically noted by Klemperer and hence not countable, where help was proffered. For example, he wrote: 'Not a day without visitors and gifts' during his wife's protracted illness.<sup>121</sup> Clearly, Heim's claim of limited support is a significant underestimation.



**Figure 15: Provision and refusal throughout the years 1933-1945**

We have seen in the previous chapters that scholars sometimes make claims about the German population as a whole based on their analyses of small – and not necessarily representative – groups of people. Heim, too, makes claims that are based on extrapolation. Until 1935 Victor Klemperer held the post of professor at the Dresden Technical University. This was a small institution which in 1928 had just 3,000 students.<sup>122</sup> She discusses at length the responses of Klemperer's professional colleagues when he faced dismissal from his post. According to Heim, 'Aryan' staff members at the university were quick to distance themselves from their Jewish colleagues. This response, she goes on to argue, was typical of how non-Jewish Germans co-operated with the regime:

This sixth sense — regardless of whether it arose from inner conviction and identification with the new powers, or from a lack of the courage of one's convictions — would become an important element of the dictatorship over the years. It made written orders or threats unnecessary, even when the issue was neither university positions nor publication opportunities, but murder and other crimes. This sixth sense, perhaps more than any

<sup>121</sup> 14 November 1943. Klemperer, *Diary 1942-1945*, p. 273.

<sup>122</sup> The Dresden Technical University archive lists the total number of students at around 3000 in 1928; the Romance Languages section was one of the smallest departments. [http://tu-dresden.de/die\\_tu\\_dresden/portrait/geschichte?set\\_language=en&cl=en](http://tu-dresden.de/die_tu_dresden/portrait/geschichte?set_language=en&cl=en)

consciously articulated opinions, is an indication of the unspoken consensus between the people and their leaders – a silent complicity.<sup>123</sup>

Heim's claim hinges on the 'sixth sense' and the 'unspoken consensus'. By this she means that his non-Jewish colleagues anticipated the discrimination against the Jews even before such measures were enacted. Prior to the 'sixth sense' claims, she remarks:

In April 1936, a year after his dismissal from the university, Klemperer mentioned a directive for civil servants forbidding them to associate with "Jews, even so-called Jews, and disreputable elements." But long before this contact prohibition was enacted, most of his colleagues had turned their backs on him.<sup>124</sup>

The problem with Heim's argument is that she completely overlooks the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service of 7 April 1933.<sup>125</sup> There was no 'sixth sense' in action here. The decree was official. University staff knew what was coming for Jews and they were powerless to alter it in any way, although some university officials opposed or attempted to thwart the ruling.<sup>126</sup> Klemperer received his final dismissal notice from the district *Gauleiter* on 30 April 1935. In subsequent diary entries he bitterly condemns his colleagues for their lack of contact and commiseration with his plight, seemingly failing to realise how much contact he did have with a number of them over the next few years and the fact that nearly all of them lost their own posts as well.<sup>127</sup> After an offer from Dr. Rainer Fetscher to hide his papers, Klemperer commented that this was 'The first and only sign of decent feelings among my colleagues at the TU.' Klemperer's remark is, in fact, inaccurate and so is Heim's generalisation about the behaviour of most of his colleagues.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Heim, p. 321.

<sup>124</sup> Heim, p. 320.

<sup>125</sup> Klemperer actually had a measure of protection from this law for a short time because of his service in WW1, but the amendments followed in short order. Heim's failure to take into account this decree and other laws pertinent to her argument amounts to suppression of inconvenient evidence.

<sup>126</sup> 15 May 1933, 17 June 1933, 13 January 1934. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, pp. 16, 17, 47-48. In these diary entries, Klemperer mentions the bitterness of the (Zentrum-supporting) dean, who stands up for Klemperer, colleague Delekat who gives church sermons where he can 'say more' than in lectures, describes the anti-Nazi maneuverings of a university committee as tyranny is 'checked and undermined from the inside' and describes hierarchy measures to keep Klemperer in his post.

<sup>127</sup> For a list of examples of contact with colleagues see footnote 166 of this chapter. Note that Klemperer himself did not seem to feel the need to contact or commiserate with colleagues when they lost their own jobs.

<sup>128</sup> 16 March 1942. Klemperer, *Diary 1942-1945*, p. 28. As already noted, because pages were smuggled into safe-keeping at regular intervals, Klemperer did not have opportunities to refer back to his past experiences by re-reading diary entries. As readers of his text, we have advantages over the author himself because we are not beholden to the difficulties of his faulty memory recall.

The sixth methodological problem with Heim's argument is her insistence that Klemperer over-estimated actions which were merely the maintenance of normal behaviour.<sup>129</sup> In such extraordinary times, given the pervasive fear of denunciation and the risks non-Jews took when having any contact with Jews, no interaction could be construed to be maintenance of normality. From 24 November 1941 it became a crime for Jews and non-Jews to appear in public together.<sup>130</sup> This means that any kind of contact had potential to be regarded as an act of opposition or even resistance. Wolfgang Mieder notes Heidrun Kämper's speculation that 'such harmless humanitarian signals must have had life-saving value for those persecuted under National Socialism.'<sup>131</sup> It is also quite conceivable that, under normal non-Nazi circumstances, Klemperer would have no expectation of ever being greeted publicly by complete strangers, as he repeatedly was. Such an interaction was one unusual and positive by-product of the Nazi regime.

It is not within the scope of this dissertation to speculate about whether the errors of Bartov and Heim are the result of carelessness in reading and understanding Klemperer's text or manipulation of evidence in the diaries to fit their pre-conceived theories. Nor is it appropriate to comment here on the overall validity of Bartov's and Heim's theories with regard to the behaviour of non-Jewish Germans as a whole. But what we can say, with some degree of confidence, is that there are significant methodological problems with the manner in which both Bartov and Heim make use the diaries of Victor Klemperer. The portrait of Klemperer's diary that one finds in their work is not an accurate representation of the original.

There are other corollaries to the poor historical practices demonstrated by Bartov and Heim. In Bartov's case, because his essay appears in *The New Republic*, it means that his assertions are perpetuated in the public arena with the capacity to shape public opinion. In Heim's case, it raises questions of the editor's responsibilities to ensure published material

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<sup>129</sup> Heim, p. 324.

<sup>130</sup> Robert Gellately, 'The Gestapo and German Society: Political Denunciation in the Gestapo Case Files', *Journal of Modern History*, 60:4 (1988), p. 677.

<sup>131</sup> Wolfgang Mieder, "'In lingua veritas': Proverbial Rhetoric in Victor Klemperer's Diaries of the Nazi Years (1933-1945)", *Western Folklore*, 59:1 (2000), p. 23, and Heidrun Kämper, 'Zeitgeschichte–Sprachgeschichte: Gedanken bei der Lektüre des Tagebuchs eines Philologen. Über die Ausgaben von Victor Klemperers Tagebuch 1933-1945', *Zeitschrift für Germanistische Linguistik*, 24 (1996), pp. 328-341, esp. p. 330.

is a reflection of good historical practice, and how much poor practice taints other essays in the same volume of works.<sup>132</sup>

## What Klemperer's Diaries Tell

Heim's belief is that it is difficult to estimate how widespread attitudes of sympathy, indifference or hostility toward Jews were. It is, however, possible to develop ideas about frequency or locate patterns in the behaviours encountered by Klemperer by simply counting the incidents recorded in his diaries. Daniel Goldhagen would not agree. He dismisses in-depth analysis of Klemperer as 'methodologically unsound distillation of the testimony of one idiosyncratic man'.<sup>133</sup> Nonetheless, even if a general sense of 'mood' appears to be conveyed throughout his diaries, it is logical to apply a different type of assessment in order to ascertain if impressions of overall tone and demeanour are in fact accurate. The results of systematically analysing the data in Klemperer's diaries might have surprised even the diarist himself.

To assess what is recorded in Klemperer's diaries, I counted every incident in Klemperer's diaries where an encounter took place between a Jewish German and a non-Jewish German before sorting the information into categories (see Appendix). My primary question was: What do Klemperer's diaries tell us about what happened when an 'ordinary German' encountered one of the people cast out from society by the Nazi regime? I made no attempt to decipher whether people agreed with or actively supported the legislated rejection of the Jews. Rather, the only concern was how they behaved when they knowingly encountered a Jew. Participants in any encounter had to be certain of each other's identity and status in the regime. This excluded incidents after the fire-bombing of Dresden when Klemperer met people who did not realise he was Jewish because his star had been ripped off. The last incident included in this count occurred mid-May 1945; all figures for 1945 are therefore lower.

The analysis does not include incidents where one of the participants (in nearly all cases, the 'Aryan') was in authority over the other or engaging actively in a role as a

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<sup>132</sup> However, as has been evident throughout this thesis, other essays from the same volume of works have their own issues with poor historical practice. This indicates that there may be wider implications for the historical profession as a whole to consider.

<sup>133</sup> Daniel Goldhagen, 'Pride and Prejudice', *The New Republic*, 220:13 (1999), p. 40.

representative of the regime, for example, a policeman undertaking official business. Most incidents involved adult-to-adult interaction; only ten involved contact between Klemperer and children. This is not surprising because he was personally and professionally situated in the adult world and had very little contact with children at any time in his life, although at one point he did express interest in gathering information about the treatment of Jewish children in schools.<sup>134</sup> All contacts with children occurred in the years 1941-1944 and in four of them Klemperer specifically notes they were Hitler Youth. All except one involved children shouting at him in the street. He usually attempts to identify the age of the children he encounters; most are recorded as being twelve years old or younger. He does hint that this type of incident occurred more frequently than he specifically notes in his diary: in discussion with a workmate who had been spat at, he noted: 'For myself, children often shout after me.'<sup>135</sup> It is not germane to this discussion to account for the behaviour of children. But there is a good case to be made that they were often the products of Nazi socialisation techniques, regardless of the attitudes of their parents.<sup>136</sup>

In Klemperer's 1933-1945 diaries, he recorded 453 encounters between Jewish-Germans and non-Jewish Germans. The majority (91 percent) were first-person accounts directly involving Klemperer. The remaining 9 percent were third-party accounts told to him by others and reported in his diaries. Of the forty-two third-party accounts, thirty-nine were recorded during the war years, as Klemperer came into closer contact with the dwindling Jewish community and heard other people's stories.

The location of incidents is significant because of the relative risks involved. Each location was sorted into one of three categories: private, semi-public or public (Figure 16). A public environment was deemed to be a location observable by any number of onlookers and in which interactions might be outside of the control of the participants, for example, in the street, on trams, in cafes, the workplace, or in shops. This sort of environment carried a

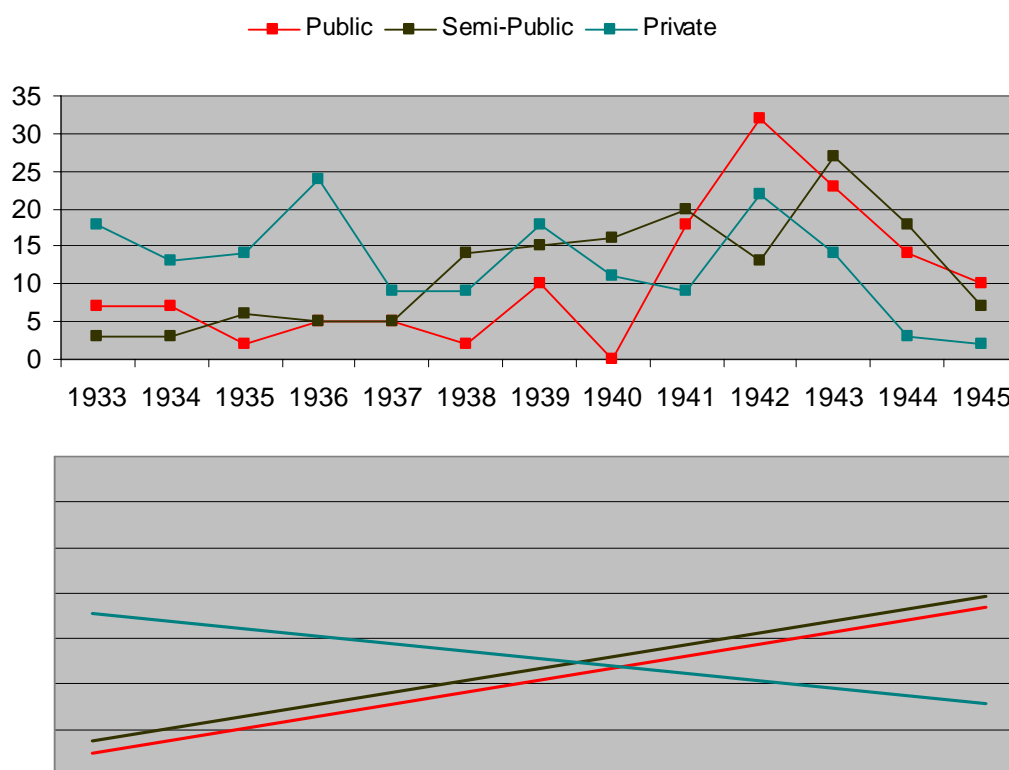
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<sup>134</sup> 19 October 1935. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 131. In the diaries there was no recorded incident involving child-to-child contact; these would not have been included in the count anyhow because of the possibility of incidents being provoked by simple childish bullying.

<sup>135</sup> 20 May 1943. Klemperer, *Diary 1942-1945*, p. 230.

<sup>136</sup> For just one example, see Helmut Ziefle's account of his mother's struggle another son's involvement with Hitler Youth. Helmut Ziefle, *One Woman Against the Reich* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 2003). No historian could legitimately allow examples of children's behaviours to carry weight in the argument for people's attitudes towards Jews, unless they are verifiably indicative of overt provocation on the part of their parents.

high risk factor because of the perceived danger of denunciation amongst the German people. The semi-public environment carried less risk because the number of onlookers was reduced and under a degree of control by the participants, for example, a doctor's waiting rooms or the hallway of a residence. A private environment, such as a home or an office with closed doors, was the safest because there was little chance of onlookers. Klemperer mentioned receiving letters from 'Aryans' just twice in the early years of the regime, both times containing unhappy news. These were classified private as they did not appear to have been affected by government interception. His phone was cut off in 1936, but he does not specifically record instances of telephone calls from 'Aryans' before then.



**Figure 16: Locations of encounters with trendlines**

The trendlines in Figure 16 reflect the changing patterns of Klemperer's lifestyle as he was increasingly exposed to a public environment. In the early years of the regime, aside from his professional life which was gradually strangled by the Nazis, Klemperer most frequently operated within the private sphere. He received visitors to his house or visited friends in their homes, and went on shopping trips, cinema outings, or driving excursions to districts surrounding Dresden. On the few occasions he interacted with strangers, the most common meeting place was in government offices. His lifestyle patterns were disrupted from May 1940 when he was forced to move away from his Dölzschen home

into the *Judenhaus* in Dresden.<sup>137</sup> He had to buy food from designated shops and eventually was forced into labouring work, firstly shovelling snow then working in factories.<sup>138</sup> From September 1941 the yellow star made him easily identifiable. As he was forced into a more public existence, the number of times he encountered strangers increased substantially (Figure 17).

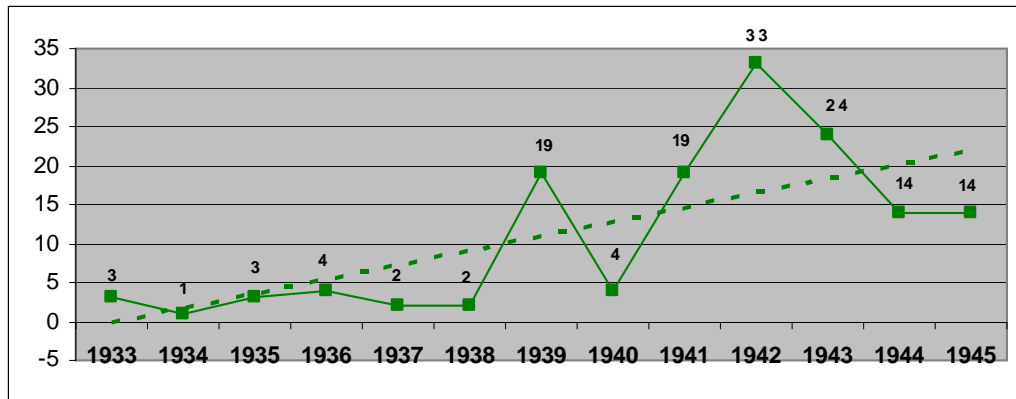


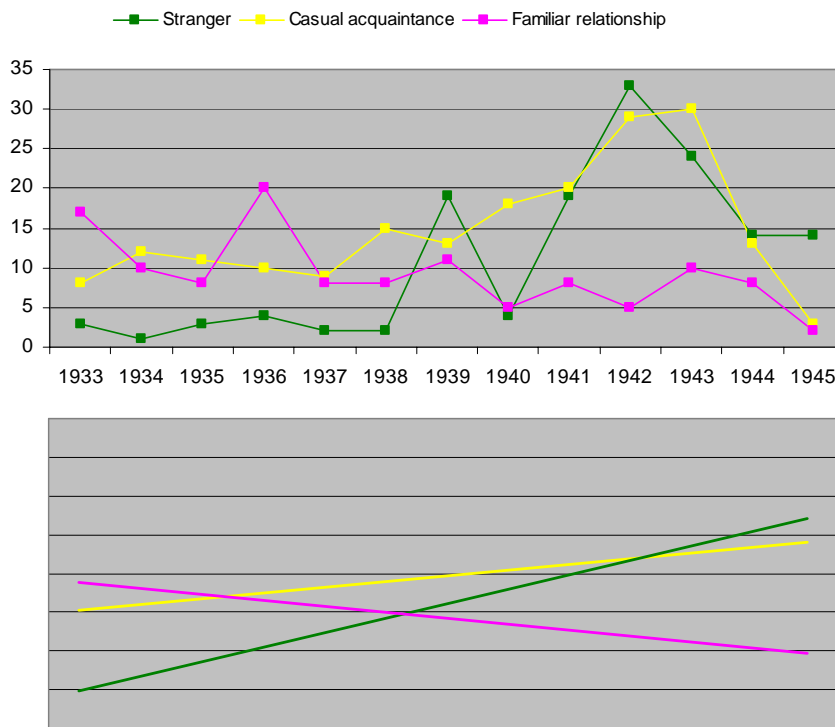
Figure 17: Klemperer's encounters with strangers (with trendline)

We can assess Klemperer's interactions with strangers by assigning each incident to one of three categories which are defined by the type of relationship (Figure 18). Strangers were those Klemperer had not encountered before and did not know their identity. Casual acquaintances were those with whom Klemperer had passing acquaintance. In casual encounters, he had no need to invest significant trust in the other participant beyond what was happening within the interaction. He usually knew the names of these casual acquaintances but did not have an ongoing personal relationship with them, for example, employees at Paschky's, the fishmonger. The 'familiar relationship' category includes people whom Klemperer knew well, either on a personal or professional basis, and in whom he invested some sort of trust. In addition to friends, these people included his colleagues at the Dresden Technical University, and other professionals he was in close and regular contact with, for example, the property agent, Richter. Some incidents contained factors which ruled them inadmissible. For example, Natscheff the librarian is frequently mentioned in the diaries but encounters with him were excluded because he was Bulgarian, not German.

<sup>137</sup> 26 May 1940. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 324.

<sup>138</sup> See 2 June 1942 for Klemperer's list of restrictions to that date. Klemperer, *Diary 1942-1945*, pp. 65-66. On 12 January 1942 he had been detained by the Gestapo who expressly forbade him to shop in his usual places.





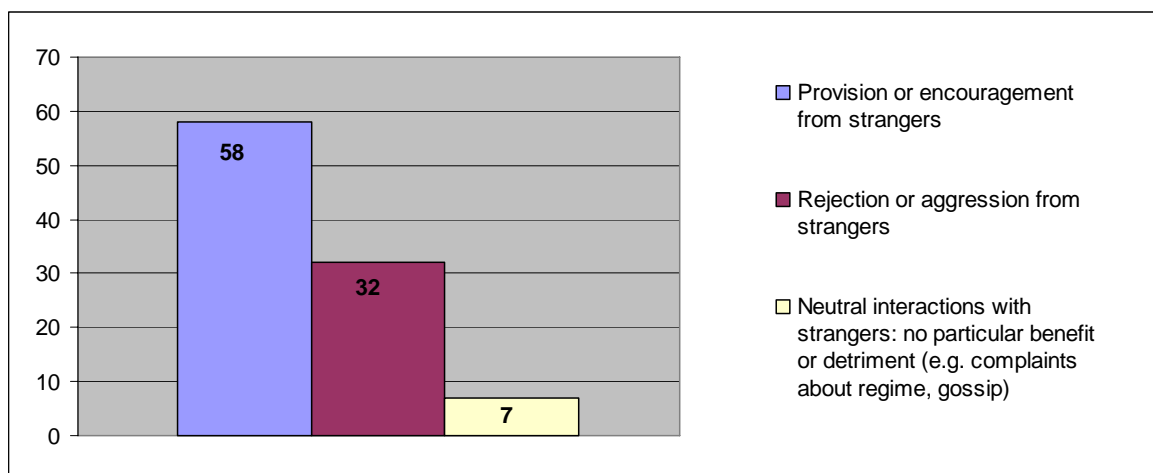
**Figure 18: Types of relationships with trendlines**

Klemperer became disconnected from a number of relationships as the regime wore on. His often-expressed feelings of being cut off from previous relationships are somewhat confirmed by the downwards moving trendline for his familiar relationships, although as we have already seen, his sense of complete isolation: ‘Our terrible abandonment by all friends’ and ‘terrible isolation . . . when all become unfaithful . . .’ is not borne out by counting the number of actual incidents.<sup>139</sup> Aside from his misapprehensions, which were discussed earlier in this chapter, the reasons for these disconnections might not have been considered by Klemperer. They could possibly, but not necessarily, be due to avoidance or withdrawal on the part of non-Jewish contacts. But other factors to take into account are his physical removal from contacts due to the loss of his job and the move from his home in Dölzschen into the *Judenhaus* in Dresden. As well, his period of forced labour meant he was not available for social interactions.

The way that Jewish Germans were treated by strangers has been the subject of frequent comment by historians. Marion Kaplan states that absolute strangers became steadily more hostile in public toward Jews long before they were forced to wear the yellow star,

<sup>139</sup> 14 September 1936, 14 October 1940. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, pp. 182, 343.

targeting those who merely looked Jewish.<sup>140</sup> Susanne Heim also contends: ‘In the last years of the war, Klemperer more and more frequently met Germans who not only supported the policies toward the Jews, but felt a need to express their hatred of the Jews personally by openly attacking them.’<sup>141</sup> The actual count of Klemperer’s interactions contradicts these claims. He notes that the first time he experienced abuse (from non-Nazis) was 1 November 1941. From the introduction of the yellow star (19 September 1941) to the end of the Nazi regime, he records encounters with strangers ninety-seven times. In twenty-nine (30 percent) of these, the strangers behaved with verbal or physical aggression towards the Jew. Significantly, in ten of these twenty-nine incidents (34 percent), the abuse came from children. Klemperer himself experienced no physical assault on his person but did report three instances he heard of from others. When the three instances of passive rejection (two refusals of service in a shop and one refusal of shelter) are included, this brings the total of ‘rejection incidents’ to thirty-two in the years he had to wear a star (Figure 19).<sup>142</sup> Over the same period, however, fifty-eight times (60 percent) he recorded acts of verbal encouragement or kindness from strangers.



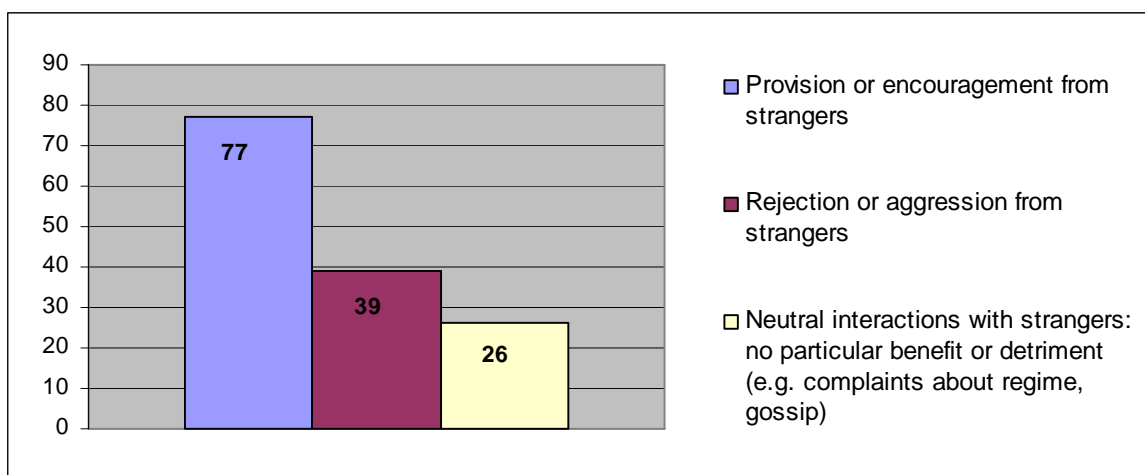
**Figure 19: Klemperer: The behaviour of strangers after the yellow star was introduced**

If we widen this enquiry to examine the entire twelve years of the regime, results reveal that the kindnesses to Klemperer from strangers still substantially outweigh the detrimental behaviours (Figure 20).

<sup>140</sup> Marion Kaplan, ‘Keeping Calm and Weathering the Storm: Jewish Women’s Responses to Daily Life in Nazi Germany, 1933-1939’ in *Women in the Holocaust*, eds. Dalia Ofer and Lenore J. Weitzman (New Haven, 1998), p. 40.

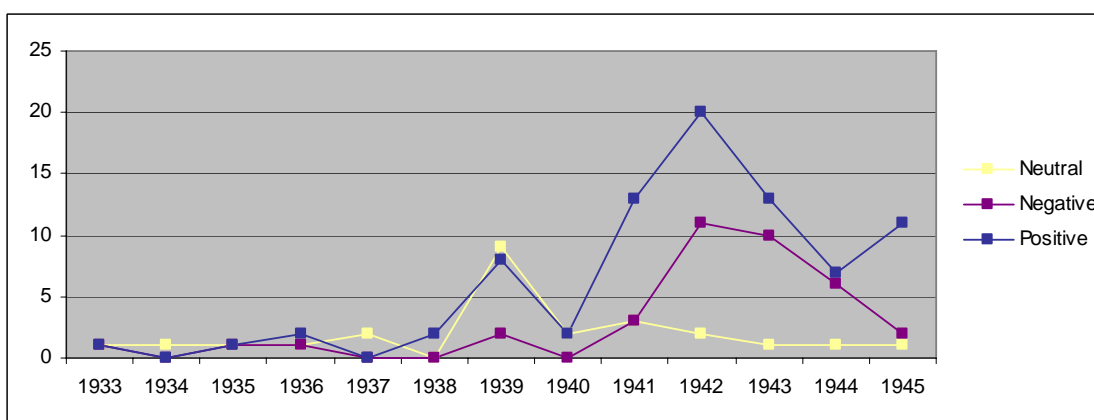
<sup>141</sup> Heim, p. 324.

<sup>142</sup> 6 January 1943, 16 August 1944, 6 April 1945 (diary entry 15 April). Klemperer, *Diary 1942-1945*, pp. 186, 345, 447.



**Figure 20: The behaviour of strangers towards Klemperer during the entire Nazi period**

In contrast to Heim's claim that 'ordinary' Germans increasingly harassed Jewish Germans as the end of the regime approached, Figure 21 clearly shows that, for Klemperer at least, the pattern was different. Not only did his negative experiences remain fewer than positive experiences, they actually declined after the peak in 1942.

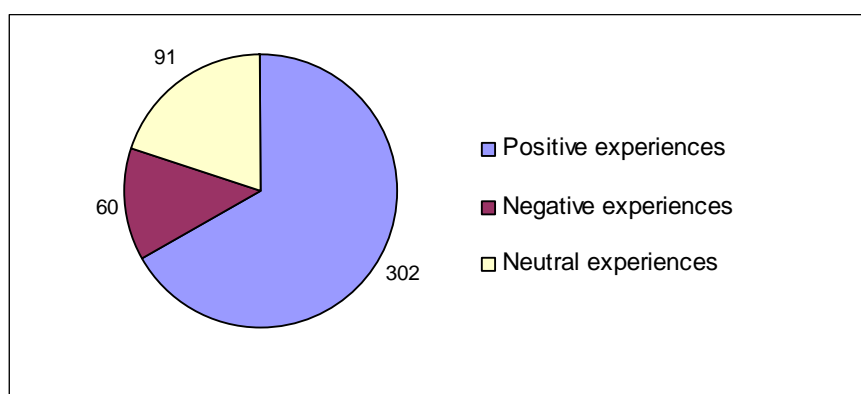


**Figure 21: Klemperer's experiences of encounters with strangers**

The peak of 'neutral' experiences in 1939 suggests how much discussion occurred among Germans as the war began. In the forty-six diary entries for 1939, Klemperer specifically commented on nineteen conversations in which political gossip was the chief focus. Eleven of these conversations occurred between Klemperer and strangers. Numerous other times he made general references to the high level of political chitchat. In each of these, the 'Aryan' German was aware he was talking to a Jew and engaged the conversation with no intent other than to chat. This indicates a level of willingness to engage freely with Jews,

although some historians interpret this as being a signal that Jewish people were considered ‘safe’ to gossip with because of the reduced risk of denunciation.<sup>143</sup> But notably during this time Klemperer experienced a peak in positive responses from strangers, often taking the form of commiseration or acknowledgement of Klemperer’s previous status.<sup>144</sup>

It is clear from Klemperer’s diaries that his encounters with non-Jews had varying types of emotional impact on him. By assigning two types of value judgments to each incident, we can analyse better how he was affected by these experiences. The first type – ‘Effect Assessment’ – focuses on the Jewish response to the behaviour of a non-Jew. In other words, it is the effect on Klemperer produced by the encounters he reported. Each incident was allocated a value of ‘positive’, ‘negative’, or ‘neutral’, according to the emotional impression Klemperer was left with after the encounter (Figure 22). Encounters which had a favourable emotional or physical effect on him were those which cheered his mood and encouraged him to feel hopeful or otherwise lifted up. These were designated ‘positive’. ‘Negative’ encounters had the opposite effect because they contributed to emotions such as depression, anger, or sense of loss. Neutral encounters were those which made no emotional impression on Klemperer. These incidents were mostly exchanges of political gossip that he merely recorded in his diary; no effect on his mood is suggested. For example, ‘A cigarette dealer said to me recently, he was pessimistic, he no longer understood the German policy,’<sup>145</sup> or: ‘Vox populi Master Haubold, who is supposed to replace the rusty stove pipe. Frequent employment of ‘shitty’ to describe the situation.’<sup>146</sup>



**Figure 22: ‘Effect Assessment’: Klemperer's responses to encounters with ‘ordinary’ Germans (See also Figure 11)**

<sup>143</sup> Bankier, *Germans*, p. 119, and Heim, p. 321.

<sup>144</sup> For example, 1 January 1939, 7 April 1939. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 285

<sup>145</sup> 1 November 1939. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 305.

<sup>146</sup> 14 September 1939. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 298.

Sometimes, Klemperer was not specific in his descriptions of incidents. For example, he often noted he had received a visitor socially, but did not record what happened during the visit or what sort of experience it was for him. This type of instance was recorded as a positive experience because clearly he benefited from the encouragement of social contact and the willingness of the participants to risk being seen entering his house. Occasionally, however, he recorded visits which had a negative effect on him. Frau Lehmann had the courage to visit only under the cover of darkness, and Klemperer noted how much it depressed him.<sup>147</sup> His visit from Johannes Köhler after his mother died was recorded as a negative encounter because of the effect on Klemperer as he faced the loss of a friendship.<sup>148</sup>

The second type of value – ‘Behaviour Assessment’ – concerns the actual behaviour of the non-Jewish participants and can be sorted into three categories (Figure 23). Firstly, behaviour which provided some sort of emotional or practical support, such as comforting words or provision of food, was designated ‘beneficial’. Secondly, behaviour emotionally or physically injurious, such as anti-Semitic abuse or spitting, was designated ‘detrimental’. Thirdly, ‘neutral’ behaviours, for example, exchanges of political gossip, were those which exhibited neither beneficial nor detrimental intent towards the Jewish participant in the encounter. The 104 neutral encounters exclusively consisted of verbal interactions such as discussions of the political situation, casual expressions of support for or discontent with regime policies, and passing on of gossip or general comments. Political gossip, occurring most intensively around the beginning of the war, occupied sixty-three of the total 453 encounters (14 percent). Klemperer mostly noted them without comment. However, a few affected him emotionally by provoking hope or despair, so they were classified positive or negative in the ‘Effect Assessment’ category. These same encounters attracted a neutral classification in the ‘Behaviour Assessment’ category because of the lack of intent towards the Jewish participant.

Another type of distinction can be made between active or passive behaviours of the non-Jewish Germans who interacted with Klemperer. For example, verbal aggression such as abuse shouted at Klemperer in the street is an example of active behaviour. Withdrawal or avoidance of previous contact usually took the form of cessation of visits to Klemperer’s

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<sup>147</sup> 10 August 1938. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 252.

<sup>148</sup> 9 June 1936. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 161.

house; this type of behaviour is counted as passive. Figure 23 shows how active or passive behaviours were classified for the analysis, with the actual number of incidents in brackets.

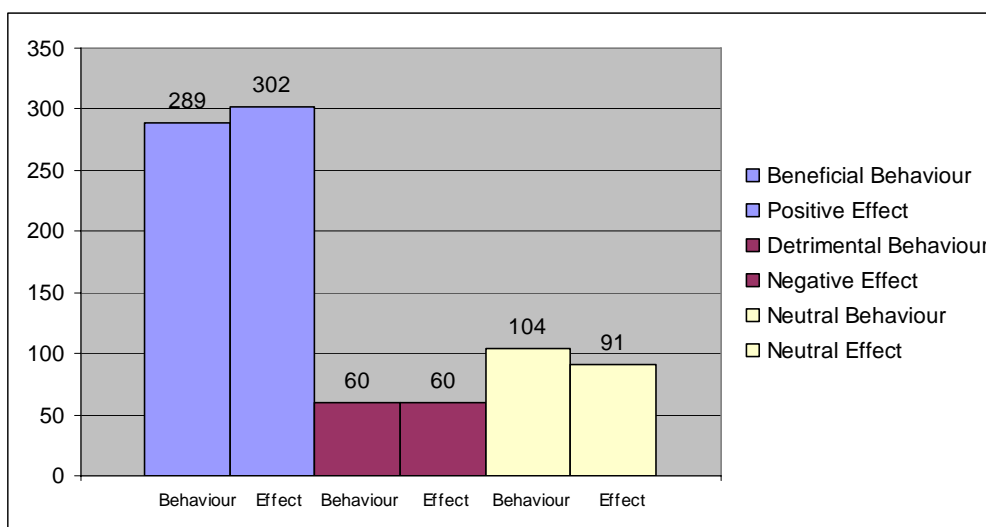
<i>Beneficial (intent towards the Jewish German)</i>	<i>Active (270 )</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Note of incident only: no dialogue recorded</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Verbal sympathy for outcast</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Practical support for outcast</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Both verbal &amp; practical support</i></li> </ul>
	<i>Passive (19)</i>	<i>e.g. sympathetic glances, failure to denounce, politeness</i>
<i>Detrimental (intent towards the Jewish German)</i>	<i>Active(33)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Note of incident only: no dialogue recorded</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Verbal aggression</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Physical aggression</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Both verbal &amp; physical aggression</i></li> </ul>
	<i>Passive (27)</i>	<i>e.g. withdrawal of contact or practical support, avoidance</i>
<i>Neutral (no intent towards the Jewish German)</i>	<i>Active(50)</i>	<i>Declaration of discontent with regime policies</i>
		<i>Declaration of support for regime policies</i>
	<i>Passive (54)</i>	<i>e.g. passing on of gossip, general comment</i>

**Figure 23: Classification of behaviours toward Jews in Klemperer's diaries**

In the main, most encounters produced effects in Klemperer concomitant with the intent of the non-Jewish participant (Figure 24). For example, those who yelled abuse at him in the street produced the desired negative effect: fear and intimidation. Those who were kind to him usually succeeded in assisting Klemperer temporarily to feel some emotional relief from his situation. There were occasions when behaviour did not match effect. For example, a tram driver and a passenger were overheard by a Jewish neighbour of Klemperer's as they exchanged political gossip detrimental to the regime. Because she was unnoticed by the gossipers, this incident qualified to be counted as neutral behaviour towards the Jew but it was counted as having a positive effect on her.<sup>149</sup> This particular incident qualified to be included in the count because of the subsequent friendly exchange between the gossipers and the Jewish woman when they realised they had been overheard.

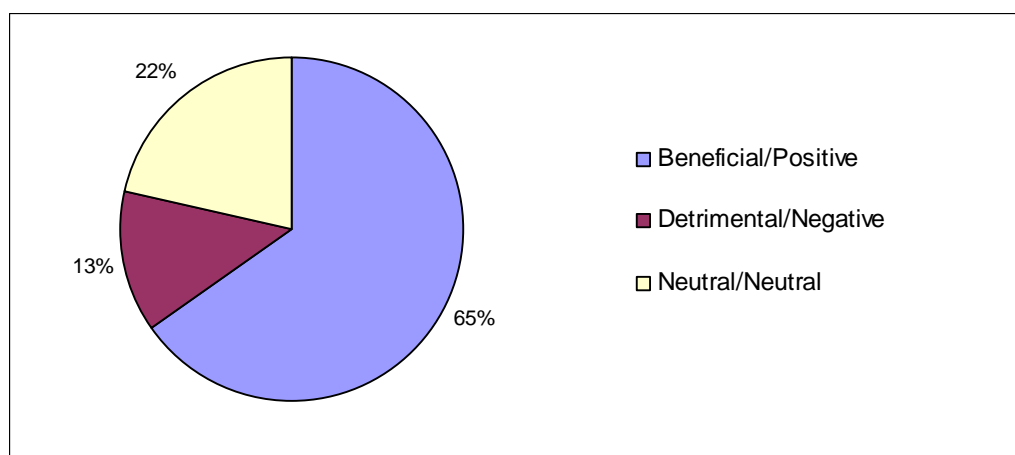
<sup>149</sup> 30 December 1941. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 435.

Other instances of comments overheard were not counted if they did not involve direct interaction between the Jewish person and the non-Jewish person.



**Figure 24: Comparison between Behaviour and Effect assessments**

In this context, whether we examine the behaviour of non-Jewish Germans or the effect on Klemperer, we can see that affirmative interactions significantly outnumbered hurtful interactions. If we combine the two value assessments, of behaviours towards the Jews and the effects on them, we can see that the results (Figure 25) create a substantially different picture than that presented by the historians examined in this dissertation.



**Figure 25: Averages obtained by combining Effect Assessments and Behaviour Assessments**

More subjectively, we can attempt to discern the motives of non-Jewish participants in their encounters with Jewish people (Figure 26). It is almost an impossible task to determine what is in someone's mind, but behaviour can be a good indicator of thinking or

intent.<sup>150</sup> Historians generally tend to avoid this sort of analysis because it fails the test of ‘objectivity’. Nevertheless, their sometimes non-verified assertions, such as ‘tacit consent’ and ‘silent complicity’, do in fact make statements about frame of mind, thereby justifying the exercise in this present context.<sup>151</sup> Historians have also made claims of motivations born of self-interest and material gain so we need to account for these here also.<sup>152</sup> The process of allocating such values is very subjective and motivations may not even be fully understood by the protagonists themselves. Nonetheless, it is useful provided we do not base our hypotheses solely on such information. The chief interest here is to see if patterns can emerge.

We can divide incidents into four categories which describe certain types of motivation. By being sure to take into account the circumstances, context, relationship and type of each encounter, motivations become more clear-cut and easier to assign to a category. The ‘conviction’ category contains responses motivated by beliefs: anti-Semitism, religious or political belief, or any other kind of personal belief. The ‘sentiment’ category concerns the behaviour of people who responded in particular ways because of perceivably ‘negative’ or ‘positive’ emotions, such as love, pity, fear, or loyalty. ‘Mercenary’ responses were assigned where it appeared the non-Jewish participant responded in a particular way because they had something tangible to gain, such as money or a house. For example, Berger, the shopkeeper, moved into Klemperer’s house when it was confiscated but Klemperer suspected his kindness was due to him wanting the house.<sup>153</sup> If there was a lesser degree of certainty in categorising a motive, it was listed as ‘unknown’. For example, an elderly lady selling vegetables in the street undercharged Klemperer and gave him ‘forbidden’ tomatoes and rare onions, while making the comment that she knew how things were for him. It is not clear what motivated her kindness, although a response based on sentiments such as pity could have been considered.<sup>154</sup> Likewise, although Fräulein Zwiener refused to sell Klemperer tobacco stating that she would only sell to ‘registered’ customers, her motivation is allocated ‘unknown’ because it is unknown whether she acted

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<sup>150</sup> John Searle, *Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 79-100, especially pp. 80, 94. One advantage we have with Klemperer’s text is, because of his comprehensiveness and communicative ability, it is easier to deduce from people’s actions how they might have been motivated.

<sup>151</sup> The examples most relevant to this discussion are Bankier, *Germans*, p. 77; Heim, p. 321; and Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews, Volume 1: The Years of Persecution 1933-1939* (New York, 1997), p. 324.

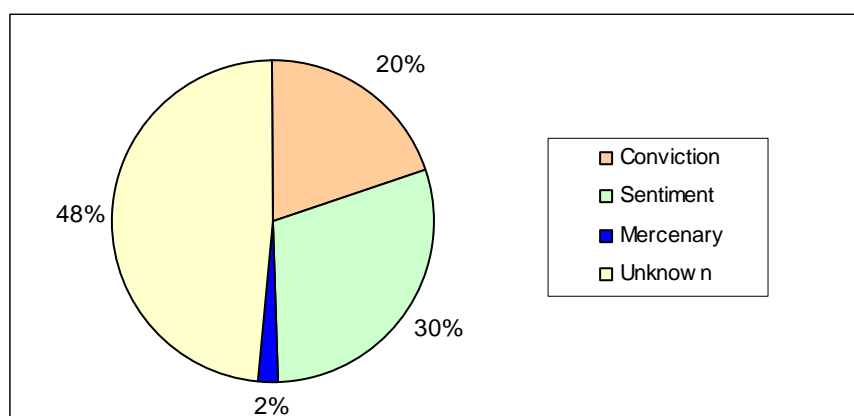
<sup>152</sup> For example, Ian Kershaw, *Popular Opinion and Political Dissent in the Third Reich: Bavaria 1933-1945* (Oxford, 1983), p. 363, and see Chapter One for discussion on historians’ assessments of motivations.

<sup>153</sup> 16 December 1939. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 309.

<sup>154</sup> 4 October 1941. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 419.



from belief that Jews should not be served (conviction), or whether she was afraid of consequences (sentiment).<sup>155</sup> Even though 50 percent of incidents were assessed as motive ‘unknown’, the survey does reveal interesting data, particularly when we are looking for information about how often people behaved in a certain way because they had something to gain. None of those allocated ‘unknown’ has potential to be transferred to the ‘mercenary’ category because in each incident it is clear the participants had nothing to gain.<sup>156</sup>



**Figure 26: Apparent motives of non-Jews interacting with Klemperer**

Figure 26 shows that where the description of an incident allows identification of motives, reasons of sentiment were the most common motivator for people’s responses. Mercenary motives were clearly a factor in only a very small number of incidents. This brings us to the allegations made by historians about other aspects of the relationships between Jews and non-Jews, which have already been discussed in this dissertation. What do Klemperer’s diaries have to tell us about indifference toward Jews, about issues of relationships in the workplace or in general, or about what happened over time? We can begin with how often Klemperer experienced mercenary or opportunistic behaviour.

Certainly Klemperer did come into contact with people who sought to gain some advantage. He recorded a total of nine incidents which were spread evenly over the twelve years of the regime, with no indication of a peak period. However, a close look at the incidents shows that while some people behaved in a way to advantage themselves, this did not mean Klemperer was necessarily disadvantaged. For example, one acquaintance

<sup>155</sup> 21 July 1941. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 404.

<sup>156</sup> Note however that this exercise concerns only Klemperer’s experiences. Due to his ‘Aryan’ wife he was not as vulnerable to exploitation as were others. It is conceivable that under other circumstances Jews were more exposed to mercenary-type behaviour.

greeted him on the street with a warning Klemperer should expect to see him dressed in Stahlhelm uniform with a swastika armband.<sup>157</sup> From the acquaintance's comments about *having* to join and his justification of the choice of organisation over the SA, it appears there were elements of self-interest in his behaviour without any intent towards Klemperer. Shopkeepers complained to Klemperer about shortages and price rises because of goods going to Berlin. Self-interest again was involved, but not to Klemperer's cost.<sup>158</sup> A lawyer who had been imprisoned by the Nazis visited Klemperer in his new role as a car polish salesman, seeking to make a sale. Klemperer bought nothing, gave him a cigarette and noted his satisfaction over interaction with a fellow intellectual. This encounter was classified 'neutral' because of the lack of effect on Klemperer. But it was allocated a 'mercenary' motive because the man had no other intent for the visit other than hoping to make some income.<sup>159</sup> Of the nine incidents, three had a classifiably neutral effect on Klemperer, four provided some (positive) benefit and two had a detrimental (negative) effect. The benefits related to obtaining special food provisions, negotiating satisfactory rental conditions for his house and selling his car for a fair price, even though all circumstances occurred as the result of deprivation instigated by the regime.<sup>160</sup> In each case the non-Jewish party also stood to gain in some way. The two detrimental/negative incidents were, firstly, Klemperer's receipt of a letter from a publisher asking him not to insist on publication of his latest work, ostensibly because the publisher wanted to protect his journal from Nazi interference, and, secondly, Berger's eventual attempt to permanently appropriate Klemperer's house in violation of their previous agreement.<sup>161</sup>

While Klemperer cannot be held to be representative of the experiences of all Jews, the data certainly shows that he was not a victim of mercenary behaviour. In fact, he gained from apparently self-interested behaviour on the part of 'Aryans' more often than he found himself at a disadvantage. This kind of information is useful to consider when we compare the assertions of widespread mercenary behaviour alleged by historians when they discuss attitudes toward the Jewish people.

<sup>157</sup> 10 August 1933. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 27.

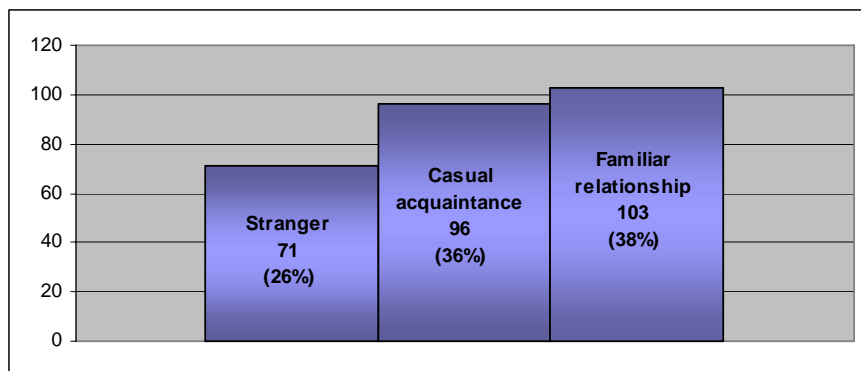
<sup>158</sup> 13 August 1936. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 175.

<sup>159</sup> 27 September 1936. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 184. Note however, that the man was simply trying to make a living so the category 'mercenary' should not be regarded as necessarily pejorative.

<sup>160</sup> 16 December 1939, 24 December 1939, 8 May 1940, 20 February 1941. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, pp. 308, 309, 321, 358.

<sup>161</sup> 30 June 1933, 24 March 1942. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 20, and *Diary 1942-1945*, p. 32.

We can now turn to examining whether Klemperer's diaries support the assertion that non-Jewish Germans were generally indifferent in their attitudes and behaviours toward Jewish Germans. As we saw in Figures 23 and 24, Victor Klemperer recorded a total of 289 incidents where non-Jewish Germans behaved in ways that provided some emotional or practical benefit to him. We can further analyse these incidents by classifying them according to Klemperer's relationship with each person (Figure 27).<sup>162</sup> Of the 289 beneficial encounters, 270 can be described as active behaviours and nineteen as passive behaviours. Active behaviours were demonstrated by non-Jewish Germans when they provided practical or emotional support, for example, food or other provisions, encouraging comments, or other activities which afforded him cheer. It is clear that when the incidents are separated into three categories the larger proportion of supportive acts (38 percent) came from those whom Klemperer knew well. But a total of 62 percent of acts of kindness were from people who either did not know or barely knew Klemperer.<sup>163</sup> For the most part, the people with whom he had no significant prior relationship had nothing to gain from the interaction with Klemperer, and were clearly not motivated by personal loyalty towards someone whom they did not know. The significance of these 270 active behaviours is that they cannot indicate indifferent attitudes, although the remaining nineteen passive behaviours do allow for this possibility.



**Figure 27: Active beneficial behaviours noted by Klemperer, according to level of relationship**

<sup>162</sup> To reiterate: strangers were those he had not met before and did not know their identity. Casual acquaintances were those he might have known the names of but had no deeper relationship than experienced within passing encounters. Familiar relationships involved a trusting, ongoing relationship at a certain level of intimacy, whether personal or professional.

<sup>163</sup> The argument that Klemperer's privileged status in being married to an 'Aryan' afforded him greater protection is irrelevant in his encounters with strangers as they would have had no knowledge of this status. Arguably Jews not similarly privileged were deported sooner which means they were not exposed to encounters with strangers as often as Klemperer.

By contrast, he recorded just sixty incidents of behaviours that were detrimental to him in some way (Figure 28). Twenty-seven were passive behaviours such as avoidance of contact – these could possibly (although not necessarily) indicate indifferent attitudes. Thirty-three incidents involved active behaviours such as yelling abuse or spitting. These active behaviours consisted of twenty-eight incidents of verbal abuse, the remaining five were acts of physical aggression – two of spitting and three of Jews jostled, chased or abused. The five incidents of physical abuse were reported to Klemperer by others. Klemperer himself was never the recipient of physical aggression at the hands of ‘ordinary’ civilians, although he and his wife suffered frequent abuse from the Gestapo.

<b>Beneficial</b>			<b>Detrimental</b>		
<b>Active:</b> <i>Benefit to the outcast</i>	<i>Record only of incident: e.g. social contact, no dialogue or activity recorded</i>	72	0	<i>Record only of incident: e.g. social contact, no dialogue or activity recorded</i>	<b>Active:</b> <i>Detriment to the outcast</i>
	<i>Verbal support</i>	76	28	<i>Verbal aggression</i>	
	<i>Practical support</i>	101	1	<i>Physical aggression</i>	
	<i>Both verbal &amp; practical support</i>	21	4	<i>Both verbal &amp; physical aggression</i>	
<b>Passive:</b> <i>Benefit to the outcast</i>	<i>e.g. sympathetic glances, failure to denounce, politeness</i>	19	27	<i>e.g. withdrawal of contact or practical support, avoidance</i>	<b>Passive:</b> <i>Detriment to the outcast</i>
		<b>289</b>	<b>60</b>		

**Figure 28: Comparison of beneficial and detrimental behaviours in Klemperer**

In summary, Klemperer recorded a total of 349 incidents where a non-Jew behaved towards him in a way that was either to his benefit or his detriment.<sup>164</sup> Because 270 of these were active beneficial behaviours we can say that in at least 77 percent of these, indifference was clearly not a factor. Klemperer’s diary is the record of just one man and we cannot use his experiences as proof of how non-Jews behaved toward Jews. But here we do have hundreds of sample behaviours that have the potential to contribute to resolving the problem of typicality. In showing us how people behaved towards Klemperer, the diaries reveal information hitherto untapped. Perhaps deeper, systematic

<sup>164</sup> Note from earlier in this chapter that the total of 453 encounters recorded by Klemperer included 104 ‘neutral’ encounters that had neither beneficial nor detrimental effect.

investigation into similar literature might give us a clearer picture. Historians cannot simply overlook such information.

At this point we can compare what historians have said about breakdown in relationships and a worsening situation over time, with the information from the preliminary analysis of memoirs in Chapter Two, and with Klemperer's record. The first area we can examine concerns loyalties to existing relationships in the workplace and in everyday life.

Klemperer's place of work was Dresden Technical University and, as pointed out by some secondary sources, Klemperer bemoaned the unfaithfulness of his colleagues from this institution.<sup>165</sup> Nevertheless, if we take into account the number of contacts he did have, something he himself did not do, we can see his belief in his total isolation and abandonment was not totally justified.<sup>166</sup> In fact, he had reasonably frequent, friendly contact with a number of colleagues after he was dismissed from his position. Furthermore, his diaries unwittingly suggest that there are other factors, seemingly unnoticed by him, which must be weighed up when considering the responses of his colleagues.

When Fräulein Mey, the 'Aryan' secretary in Klemperer's university department came to dinner, she told the Klemperers of the 'discontent, fear everywhere' among the university's employees and professors as everyone wondered: 'Who will they topple, what next?'<sup>167</sup> Here we have a glimpse of a bigger picture. Mey's comment indicates the possibility that the focus of the academics was not ridding themselves of Jews in their departments for their own benefit. It appears they felt rather vulnerable themselves and wondered if they were about to suffer a fate similar to the Jews. In the end, their anxieties were confirmed. Klemperer's entire department was first reorganised then closed completely. It was not just Jews who lost their posts.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> 14 October 1940. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 343.

<sup>166</sup> For examples (not exhaustive) of visits or other expressions of support from 'Aryan' former colleagues see 15 May 1933, 17 June 1933, 28 July 1933, 24 April 1934, 20 November 1934, 21 July 1935, 16 September 1935, 6 October 1935, 8 July 1936, 13 August 1936, 20 June 1937, 17 September 1941, 16 March 1942, 17 August 1943. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, pp. 15, 18, 25, 61, 95, 123, 127, 129, 167, 175, 217-218, 411-413, and Klemperer, *Diary 1942-1945*, pp. 28, 253.

<sup>167</sup> 28 July 1933. Victor Klemperer, *Ich will Zeugnis ablegen bis zum letzten: Tagebücher 1933-1941* (Berlin, 1995), p. 44. The text is omitted from the English translation, which highlights the problems of sources being contaminated by the editorial process: 'Wir hatten Fräulein Mey zum Abendbrot bei uns, die ganz deutschnationale, die unter den kleinen Angestellten der TH und bei den Professoren gleichermaßen Bescheid weiß: Unzufriedenheit, Angst überall. Nur überall die Frage: Wer wird sie stürzen, was kommt dann?'

<sup>168</sup> 13 January 1934, 2 December 1935, 11 June 1936, 8 July 1936. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, pp. 47-48, 134, 162, 166-167.

By consulting another type of source, we locate a further perspective as Edward Hartshorne alerts us to the dimensions of an academic career in Germany. He notes that a principal consequence of the German University system was that members of a faculty tended to know only a relatively small number of their colleagues.<sup>169</sup> This factor is reinforced by Klemperer's failure to recollect former colleague Rainer Fetscher, who eventually proved loyal to Klemperer and other Jews at great cost to himself.<sup>170</sup> Putting all this information together indicates that Klemperer inhabited a small world professionally and when dismissed from his post on racial grounds, left behind him colleagues who were conceivably more anxious about their own positions.<sup>171</sup> We must also consider the colleagues specifically named as objects of Klemperer's wrath. He does not indicate that he felt rejected by any of them because of his Jewishness or that their self-serving behaviour afforded him personal cost other than his perceived abandonment. He expressed disgust with them for other reasons even as he continued social exchanges with them: Johannes Kühn's approval for Nazi ideology, Adolf Spamer's benign acceptance of promotion within the system, and the Russian Fjodor Stepun's presumed spying.<sup>172</sup> There may well have been colleagues who discontinued relationships with Klemperer or personally benefited from his dismissal. No specific entry in the diaries notes this. Although Klemperer cannot be held representative of all Jewish university academics, neither can his testimony be dismissed as non-representative unless a systematic analysis of all similar testimonies proves it. From Klemperer's diaries, a picture emerges of a small university department with anxious employees. Some compromise, adapt or buy into the new system, but, it appears, many more attempt to find ways to survive or even undermine the programme being imposed on them.<sup>173</sup> There is enough information in Klemperer's diaries to suggest there is more to learn about just what Jews in the universities

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<sup>169</sup> Edward Hartshorne, *The German Universities and National Socialism* (London, 1937), p. 126.

<sup>170</sup> 17 August 1943, 19 April 1942. Klemperer, *Diary 1942-1945*, pp. 253, 41. See also Klemperer's comment about the suicide of another professor whom he did not know. 13 June 1934. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, p. 68. For details of Rainier Fetscher see Michael Kater, *Doctors under Hitler* (Chapel Hill, 1989), p. 78.

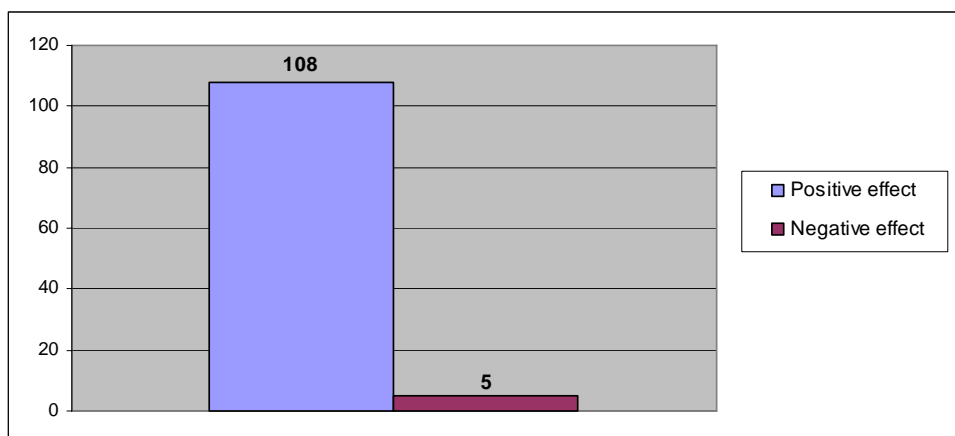
<sup>171</sup> Note also that Klemperer's department was a very small department in a small university: in 1928 there were only about 3,000 students enrolled at Dresden TU, most of whom were enrolled in technology studies. [http://tu-dresden.de/die\\_tu\\_dresden/portrait/geschichte?set\\_language=en&cl=en](http://tu-dresden.de/die_tu_dresden/portrait/geschichte?set_language=en&cl=en) (5 Sept. 2008).

<sup>172</sup> 7 May 1935, Postscript 1935, 16 August 1936. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, pp. 117, 137, 176. Note that Klemperer later describes Kühn as 'neither a Nazi nor a bad man'. 7 October 1946. Klemperer, *Diaries 1945-59*, p. 152.

<sup>173</sup> 13 January 1934. Klemperer, *Diaries 1933-41*, pp. 47-48.

experienced in their encounters with their non-Jewish colleagues.<sup>174</sup> A comparison with documents from other university academics would put this to the test. Whatever the final outcome of a proper survey of the attitudes among academics in universities, we cannot justifiably claim that Victor Klemperer, a victim of the Nazi regime, was also a victim of rejection or self-seeking behaviour by his colleagues

When we analysed the descriptions of existing relationships in the Limberg memoirs, the instances of loyalty (forty-seven) outweighed the instances of disloyalty (twenty-three). These can now be compared to Victor Klemperer's experiences.<sup>175</sup> The data from his diaries which most closely correlates with the loyalty count from Limberg comes from the count of positive or negative effects Klemperer experienced when he encountered people with whom he was 'familiar'. In other words, he had ongoing personal or professional trust-based relationships with the people in his 'familiar' relationships. Klemperer recorded a significantly larger number of positive experiences than negative experiences for these relationships (Figure 29).



**Figure 29: Comparison of experiences in 'familiar' relationships (Klemperer)**

What does a comparison between the Klemperer figures and Limberg figures (Figures 2 and 3) tell us? In both measures, positive experiences (or experiences of loyalty) outweighed negative (or experiences of disloyalty). Klemperer had proportionately more

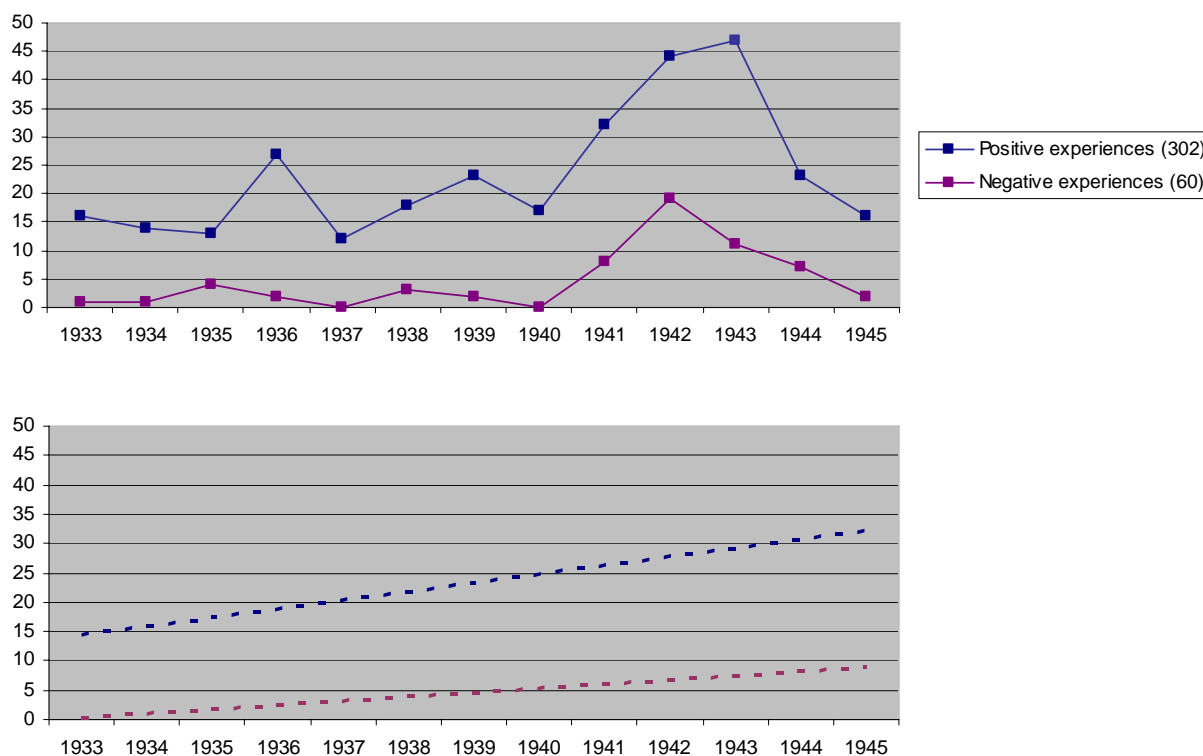
<sup>174</sup> The evidence located by historians so far indicates that support for the regime was widespread within the student body. Edward Hartshorne comments on the divide between students and their professors, stating that a 'student, until he was ready to do his doctoral work, had little or no opportunity to become personally acquainted with his professor.' Hartshorne, p. 126. For this reason it seems logical that relationships between Jewish and non-Jewish students be explored separately from relationships between Jewish and non-Jewish university employees.

<sup>175</sup> Note however the differences between Klemperer and the 'My Life in Germany' respondents; the essay writers had left Germany, were self-consciously addressing an American audience and were at a greater psychological distance from German society than Klemperer. See Liebersohn, p. 26

positive experiences than those of the Limberg narrators who functioned in wider or different contexts. Klemperer's accounts are advantaged by his determination to record every detail as accurately as possible, but disadvantaged by his limited range of contacts. The Limberg essays operate within a wider context but are more likely prone to selectivity than Klemperer. Even though there are several factors to take into account, we see here the mere suggestion of a pattern: two different types of source reveal similar information. A diarist scrupulously recording events on a daily basis presents a picture that bears resemblances to a group of other people recalling their experiences from a distance.

The second point of comparison between the historians' assessments and the personal narratives concerns changes over time. When we compare the oral history and memoir samples (Figures 6 and 7) with Klemperer's records of his encounters with non-Jews over the entire period of the Nazi regime, we see a slightly different pattern (Figure 30). Figures 6 and 7 reveal that Jewish survivors told stories that indicated decreases in both positive and negative experiences over time, a trend that differs from Klemperer's records. Nonetheless, incidents that had a positive effect on him still consistently outnumbered those that had a negative effect. We have a lot more detail about the specifics of Klemperer's experiences than we have for the oral histories of memoirs. This means we can account for some of the factors that influenced his encounters. Clear peaks in both positive and negative experiences coincide with his period of forced labour (1942). At this time he was in the public eye and exposed to contact with strangers as never before. While his record shows an increase in negative encounters, at the same time he also experienced a large jump in the number of sympathetic comments or the amount of kindness directed his way. The trendlines show an increase in both positive and negative experiences as time progressed, with negative experiences increasing at a lesser rate. The most obvious explanation is that he was increasingly exposed to multiple contacts as he was forced into the streets shovelling snow and later into factories. In spite of his own gloom over broken relationships and feelings of isolation, it appears that Klemperer did not experience increasing indifference or hostility in his encounters with non-Jews.





**Figure 30: Positive and negative encounters over time with trendlines (Klemperer)**

Three categories of distortion emerge when we compare the scholars' arguments with systematic analysis of Klemperer's diaries. The first category involves faithfully reporting Klemperer's perceptions but not accounting for the fact that his perceptions may have been inaccurate or misguided. The second category involves distorting what he actually says by quoting him out of context. The third category is where, even if they have accurately represented what he says, historians over-generalize to unjustifiably make a point.

But what of Klemperer — are his diaries nevertheless useful as a source? Clearly he must not be held as representative of the Jews' experiences in general. But historians have found individual case studies, for example, Ian Kershaw's substantial work on Bavaria, useful to help provide a snapshot of life under the Third Reich, which is precisely what Klemperer does. For the sorts of questions asked in this chapter about attitudes of 'ordinary' Germans, Klemperer has provided a large amount of data which reveals clear patterns and trends.<sup>176</sup> What emerges is that, in spite of his oft-expressed disgust with the German population, overall he was well-treated and even protected by those he encountered. He was fully

<sup>176</sup> What these diaries have to offer, in terms of information useful for historians, has certainly not been exhausted in this analysis. To my knowledge, no-one has yet attempted to explore the diaries with any degree of comprehensiveness. They have much more to offer for our understanding of life in the Third Reich.

justified in his terror and misery at the hands of the Nazis but clearly knew he was not at risk from those 'Aryans' who surrounded him in his everyday life. His theme of searching for the *vox populi* throughout the twelve years of the regime brought him to no firm conclusions. He vacillated from one extreme to another and most of the time acknowledged he really could not tell what most 'ordinary' Germans felt about Hitler and his henchmen. For the most part, the diaries reveal no striking instances of overt or determined resistance to the Nazis but along with the evidence of frequent conformities appears the multiple small disobediences which provide clues to the secret disapproval of the people. What is certain however, is that there is no justification for Robert Gellately's analysis: 'A sense of how the Germans responded positively to various waves of persecution and even to the spirit of Nazi 'justice', is conveyed on almost every page of Professor Victor Klemperer's recently published diary.'<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, p. 8.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this dissertation was to examine how, and how well, historians use evidence. To this end, I chose a specific case study, namely, the historiography of relations between Jewish and non-Jewish Germans during the Nazi era. Few topics in history have generated more interest than the Third Reich and, in particular, the Holocaust. Those historians who specialise in this field are amongst the best known, and best selling, in the entire historical profession. They have access to a range of primary sources, both published and unpublished, that is extraordinarily rich. It is therefore logical to expect that it is in this field that we should see history being done at its best.

Unhappily, as we have seen, the methodology of a some prominent historians can be indicted on three counts: Firstly, they have not always made wise decisions in terms of which evidence to look at; Secondly, they have frequently misused evidence; Thirdly, they have failed to look properly at a whole range of evidence that is to be found both in the historical record and in the work of other disciplines.

These methodological errors are the result of several shortcomings: the failure conscientiously to adhere to rigorous methodology, the imposition of pre-conceived ideas on their handling of evidence, or perhaps even the result of lack of ability to maintain good historical practice. Furthermore, these problems are compounded by the fact that historians quote each other and transfer the errors from one generation of commentary to the next.<sup>1</sup> These problems give rise to questions of how and why this can happen. My conclusion is that there are two key areas that should be addressed by historians who tackle the social history of the Third Reich. However, the recognition of these areas also raises the question of how they are related to the history profession in general and whether there are lessons for all historians, no matter which field they work in.

The first area is that the historians examined in this study are not rigorously holding themselves to standards in terms of their use of evidence. This is occurring in spite of the reminders that come from peers within the profession. We are reminded that we must be painstaking and include extensive quality source material, rigorous analysis, and

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter One, Footnote 132 of this dissertation.

persuasive argument based on verifiable professional standards.<sup>2</sup> We are reminded that even though we face accusations of pedantry or find the work tedious and demanding, we are still expected to pursue truthfulness.<sup>3</sup> We are also called to ‘jettison dearly-held interpretations in the face of the recalcitrance of the evidence.’<sup>4</sup> Yet, as we have seen, too many historians still fail to follow such sage advice. Raul Hilberg describes the Holocaust as a ‘novel event and a new marker in history.’<sup>5</sup> One consequence of this uniqueness is that, unlike any other field in the study of the past, historians, perhaps unavoidably, tend to apply moral weight to their conclusions. But Hilberg implies more than that. His implication is that history should be done differently when it comes to this particular subject. My argument is that because the issues and mistakes we have observed here are for the most part methodological, they do not contaminate the sanctity of remembering, but they do contaminate the effectiveness of historical enquiry.

In this dissertation I have argued that historical evidence should be evaluated and utilised in the light of six key methodological principles. These are that historians must always take a critical approach to their sources, they must refrain from imposing their pre-existing theories on the evidence, they should draw on the knowledge that other disciplines offer, the evidence from the group under scrutiny is just as valuable as the evidence generated by groups not under scrutiny, sources and evidence must be approached with an open mind, and historians must approach their material as systematically as possible. None of these principles are innovative, nor are they unfamiliar. For historians they should be practised as a matter of common sense and be part of orthodox historical practice. Unfortunately, it would seem that many prominent scholars of the Third Reich do not always adhere to these principles.

The factors that potentially contribute to the problems comprise a long inventory. Listed here in no particular order, these factors are probably not exhaustive. Firstly, as new sources become available (as does from time-to-time even today), the excitement of working with new material overwhelms considerations of ensuring that sources are

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<sup>2</sup> Ulrich Herbert, ‘Extermination Policy: New Answers and Questions about the History of the “Holocaust” in German Historiography’, in *National Socialist Extermination Policies: Contemporary German Perspectives and Controversies*, ed. U. Herbert (New York, 2000), pp. 43-44.

<sup>3</sup> Geoff Eley, ‘Hitler’s Silent Majority? Conformity and Resistance under the Third Reich’, *Michigan Quarterly Review* (Part Two), 42:3 (2003), p. 563.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Evans, *In Defence of History* (London, 2000), p. 120.

<sup>5</sup> Raul Hilberg, ‘I Was Not There’, in *Writing and the Holocaust*, ed. Berel Lang (New York, 1988), p.17.

qualitatively and quantitatively assessed and balanced against the sources that are already known. Secondly, it appears that historians have a tendency to quote other historians without checking their claims, which means they are not adequately policing the standards of fellow professionals. Thirdly, it is possible that historiographical fashion plays a role. Often an attitude that older work or methodology is out-of-date and no longer relevant can develop, which encourages historians to jump into new (and sometimes untested) ways of doing history. Fourthly, it is possible that insufficient attention is given to training historians in historical methodology; sometimes this can be observed in the published work of professional historians. The finer issues of strategy and method are not given as much attention as they deserve. Fifthly, there are pressures on historians to make their mark by suggesting new theories. It is the new theories or the controversial claims which will draw the attention of academics or the reading public. Sixthly, there are commercial pressures to produce something that will be read, either by other academics or by the public. Works that pay close attention to methodology and discuss at length its finer details can make for dull reading. Historians can have an instinctive desire to produce work that suits the fancies of the consumers.

There are two further factors which are possibly a particular feature of Third Reich and Holocaust historiography. The subject matter is highly emotive and contentious; a non-emotional response must surely be almost impossible. Although all manner of historians study all manner of horrific elements in human history, the sheer scale and monstrosity of the crimes committed by the Nazis inevitably take a toll on those who study them. It would be a rare historian who would not feel a sense of how the topic can 'plunge us without life preservers into the maelstrom of the disaster'.<sup>6</sup> But this does not permit the historian to disengage from the professional standards required for good practice. But many of the historians of the Third Reich have personal connections to the topic in some way, either being survivors themselves or by having close connections to those who did not survive. It is almost too much to ask them to remain 'detached and analytical' under these circumstances.<sup>7</sup> The requirement in this case is for historians to be transparent and honest. If it is relevant in some way, there should be no excuse for historians to conceal their own (ideological, political or personal) positions or circumstances. It is not unprofessional for a

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<sup>6</sup> Lawrence Langer, *Admitting the Holocaust: Collected Essays* (New York, 1995), p. 13.

<sup>7</sup> See David Bankier, *The Germans and the Final Solution: Public Opinion under Nazism* (Oxford, 1992), p. 118.

historian to admit to an emotional response to the material or to be operating from a position that has been influenced by personal circumstances. But it is unhelpful if this information is concealed from the reader. It is also not acceptable if they act on emotional responses by refusing to confront uncongenial facts, by avoiding sources that conflict with their preferred viewpoint, or by accepting uncritically evidence that suits their argument while trying to discredit or explain away evidence that contradicts it. Historians must be prepared to follow the wisdom of John Maynard Keynes: ‘When the facts change, I change my mind. What do you do sir?’<sup>8</sup> If new evidence emerges, or if the status of old evidence has to be revised, a conscientious historian should not be afraid to re-evaluate his or her previous conclusions. There is no honour in rigidly adhering to a position in the face of evidence to the contrary.

The second area for historians to address concerns their competence in social history and whether they are equipping themselves to do the job properly. The nineteenth century founders of the modern discipline of history were preoccupied with the decisions and decision-making processes of political and religious elites. The methodological procedures that they developed were suited to the study of the ideas, intentions and situations of individuals and small groups, but not to the views that prevailed in whole social classes or amongst the general public. They did not need sophisticated sampling techniques, nor did they need to confront the difficulties that beset historians who try to reconstruct the largely undocumented views of history’s silent majorities. The growth of social history and ‘history from below’ from the 1960s exposed the limitations of traditional methodologies. Historians were often ill-equipped to deal with the problems of sampling, of representativeness, and of inference from scattered and fragmentary sources that they now confronted. All too often they failed to elaborate and apply methodological procedures that were required if they were to test their preconceptions and preferences with appropriate rigour.<sup>9</sup>

It is possible that, with the advent of social history and the new ‘bottom up’ focus, training has not always been adjusted accordingly and historians have employed casual strategies in

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<sup>8</sup> Keynes, quoted in Malabre, Alfred L., *Lost Prophets: An Insider's History of the Modern Economists* (Boston, Mass., 1994), p.20.

<sup>9</sup> See Miles Fairburn, *Social History: Problems, Strategies and Methods* (New York, 1999), p. 8, and Lee Benson, ‘An Approach to the Scientific Study of Past Public Opinion’, *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 31:4 (1967-1968), pp. 527-529.

analysing information. A prerequisite for doing social history is to recognise that typologies, categories, definitions or certainties are more elusive to locate and more easily blurred when it comes to the study of 'ordinary' people: 'Black and white becomes grey on grey.'<sup>10</sup> Methods such as 'number crunching' which have been long accepted by other social sciences are viewed with trepidation or disdain by historians who are suspicious of quantitative approaches.<sup>11</sup> But historians must be prepared consciously and systematically to develop valid and reliable procedures to extract quality information from their sources.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, they must not only be prepared to put them to the test, but to do so in such a transparent manner that other historians can put their conclusions to the test as well.

The problem of source selection has emerged as a key trap for historians. Traditional historical practice has involved near-exclusive use of 'top-down' sources, with special emphasis on archival research. This perhaps helps to explain the over-riding importance that some historians of the Nazi era have placed on official sources such as Gestapo reports. But in social history this approach is inadequate. It is vitally important that the voices of the people who are being studied are heard and that historians use sources that are not driven by the needs, perspectives, and biases of official information-gatherers. Personal narratives such as diaries, memoirs, oral histories, interviews or surveys are essential elements, in spite of the problems that many historians perceive them to have. Particularly in the study of the Nazi era, these testimonies help us step away from the 'perpetrators' interpretive monopoly' derived from the official records and remain attuned to the responses of their victims.<sup>13</sup> Personal narratives such as diaries cannot convey all dimensions of people's experiences but they can shed light on their efforts to find meaning and understanding in their experiences.<sup>14</sup> This type of information is not available from the official documentation, but if the archived records are used to complement personal narratives we can achieve a balance of viewpoints. Where we have concerns about typicality or the representative nature of our evidence, we have enough accumulated evidence to permit the comparative study of testimonies.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, the record of just one

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<sup>10</sup> Detlev Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition and Racism in Everyday Life* (London, 1993), pp.14-15.

<sup>11</sup> Fairburn, *Social History*, pp. 148-149.

<sup>12</sup> Benson, 'Past Public Opinion', p. 567.

<sup>13</sup> Herbert, 'New Answers', p. 17.

<sup>14</sup> Alexandra Garbarini, *Numbered Days: Diaries and the Holocaust* (New Haven, 2006), p. xiii.

<sup>15</sup> See Rita Horváth, 'On Comparing Jewish Survivors' Testimonies taken by the National Relief Committee for Deportees in Hungary and Other Large-Scale Historical-Memorial Projects of She'erit Hapletah in the Immediate Aftermath of the Holocaust (1945-1948)', *Yad Vashem* (2004),

individual, such as Victor Klemperer, is also the record of the hundreds of individuals whom he encountered throughout the twelve Nazi years. More than just glimpsing the lives of individuals, we also gain a view of communities through the personal testimonies of those who were eyewitnesses. Richard Evans assures us that a document can be made to reveal more than its author thought.<sup>16</sup> In this we can be assisted by other social sciences which have long experience of studying how human behaviour works, whether it is ordinary behaviour under extraordinary circumstances or the extraordinary behaviours that can result from succumbing to the pressures of oppressive dictatorship. Most importantly, historians need to be methodologically rigorous in order to avoid attributing their own perspectives to people in the past, and in order to avoid misrepresenting the past in ways that reflect their own prejudices and political agendas.<sup>17</sup>

The two areas discussed above bring us to the question of their relevance to the history profession in general. Are the problems raised in this dissertation specific to the study of the Third Reich or are they generic to the history profession as a whole?

We have uncovered a long list of sins committed by historians: uneven treatment of sources, accepting material at face value, over-generalisation from the available evidence, failing to identify alternative explanations, tendentiousness, and (most disgracefully) occasional misuse of evidence. But there is no reason to believe any of these transgressions are confined solely to Holocaust and Third Reich studies. They could just as easily apply in general to any field of historical enquiry. Likewise, the six methodological principles advocated are either universally valid or not valid at all. None of the six points is specific to the issue of relations between Jews and non-Jews in the Third Reich. It is entirely possible that lack of methodological rigour is, if not universal, at least endemic within the profession. Only a similar investigation of another field of historical enquiry could cast light on this suggestion.

Joshua Abraham was a resident of Sonderburg who, for many years, had met twice-weekly with his friends to play cards. Within days of Hitler's ascension to power, Abraham's life

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[http://www1.yadvashem.org/about\\_yad/departments/institute/Dr\\_Rita.html](http://www1.yadvashem.org/about_yad/departments/institute/Dr_Rita.html).

<sup>16</sup> Evans, *In Defence*, pp. 91-92.

<sup>17</sup> Ian Kershaw, 'Beware the Moral High Ground' in *H-Soz-u-Kult*, 24 Feb.2004, <http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/forum/id=418&type=diskussionen>. See also Fairburn, *Social History*, pp. 159-160.



changed. “As soon as the Nazis came to power,” he recalled, “I was no longer told when they were playing cards. Everything stopped. I would see them on the street and we pretended we didn’t see each other. Not one of them spoke to me.”<sup>18</sup> Similar stories are told over and over again by Jewish survivors from different towns, different circumstances and with different outcomes. On the other hand, many survivors tell stories that present a different picture. Abraham’s story may be typical of the Jewish experience, it may not be. If we accumulate a large enough number of anecdotes, particularly from personal narratives, the probability of a representative picture emerging increases in proportion to the size of the body of evidence.<sup>19</sup> Only systematic collection and analysis of the data will permit valid conclusions. Our goal is to obtain the *best* explanation.<sup>20</sup> Until historians are prepared to admit all of the available evidence for consideration, to sift that evidence systematically, to analyse it using all the appropriate methodological tools, and to draw conclusions without prejudice, we cannot claim that we have located the best explanation. Contrary to those who assert there is no more to be gained by continuing to search for such explanations, we indeed have many paths to tread before we gain a clearer understanding of the true social history of the Third Reich. Personal narratives have an important, even vital part to play in this process. They are unjustifiably prevented from contributing meaningfully to our understanding of the Third Reich by historians who have not carefully considered how best they can be used. Because they do have weaknesses, only a rigorous methodological approach will minimise their shortcomings and maximise their value. In this the problems lie with the historians, not the sources. It is premature to claim that we have extracted all there is to know about Third Reich history from the extant sources. There is always room to grow in our understanding and in our practice of history.

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<sup>18</sup> Victoria Barnett, *Bystanders: Conscience and Complicity during the Holocaust* (Westport, Conn., 1999), p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> Fairburn, *Social History*, p. 61.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 235.

## Appendix

### Methodology: Data analysis

This appendix provides details of the processes I used to assemble data from the diaries of Victor Klemperer. The data I obtained from other primary sources was based on similar methods, with some variations which were due to the differences in the type of material.

To collect data from Klemperer's diaries, I used a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet containing sixteen worksheets, one for each year of the Nazi regime, two to collate and sort results for graphing and one to collate Klemperer's *vox populi* comments. The end result was a spreadsheet containing so much data it took a full five seconds to save each time I clicked the 'save' tab!

Each time Klemperer recorded an encounter between a Jew and a non-Jew (either individual or group encounter) detailed information was entered into the spreadsheet:

#### 1. Technical data

- Incident number/date
- Page number
- Incident description (brief overview)
- Geographical location (e.g. Dresden, Dölzschen )
- Physical context (e.g. home, street, tram, shop, restaurant/cafe, office, workplace)
- Participants
  - Adult
  - Child (13+)
- Report integrity
  - Eye witness
  - Third party report

#### 2. Incident Assessment

##### a) Behaviour Analysis (Non-Jew's behaviour towards outcast)

- **Active Neutral: No intent towards outcast**
  - Discontent with regime policies
  - Support for regime policies
- **Active: Benefit to the outcast**
  - Record only of incident: no dialogue or activity recorded e.g. social contact recorded
  - Verbal sympathy for outcast
  - Practical support for outcast
  - Both verbal & practical support
- **Active: Detriment to the outcast**
  - Record only of incident: no dialogue or activity recorded e.g. social contact recorded
  - Verbal aggression
  - Physical aggression
  - Both verbal & physical aggression
- **Passive: Benefit to outcast**

- eg sympathetic glances, failure to denounce, politeness
- **Passive: Detriment to outcast**
  - e.g. withdrawal of contact or practical support, avoidance
- **Passive Neutral: Contact, no clear intent**
  - e.g. passing on of gossip, general comments

**b) Effect Analysis** (Outcast's emotive response)

- Positive response
- Negative response
- Neutral response
- **Location of incident**
  - Public
  - Semi-Public
  - Private
- **Relationship**
  - Stranger
  - Casual Acquaintance
  - Familiar Relationship
    - Professional
    - Personal
    - Family
- **Motivation of the non-Jewish participant**
  - Conviction (political or personal belief)
  - Sentiment (personal/emotional reasons)
  - Mercenary/opportunistic
  - Unknown

### 3. Other information/quotes

Although a great deal of information was extracted from each incident, the use of the spreadsheet meant that information could be sorted, tallied, and cross-checked without difficulty (see Figure 1).

The trendlines displayed in some graphs are, fortunately for me, automated features of Microsoft Excel. I would expect, naturally, that a larger and more extensive study based on the same principles of systematic analysis, would also employ more sophisticated and formal methods of calculating trends and statistical information.

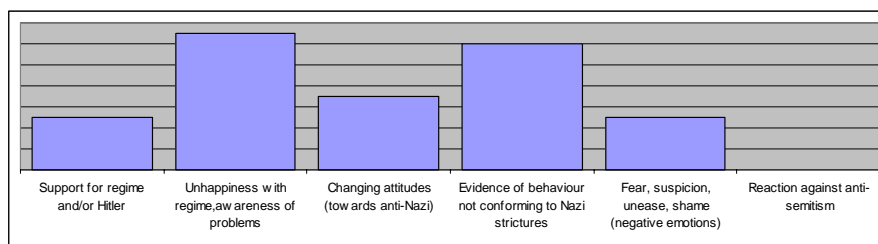
***Vox Populi***

Another type of analysis from Klemperer's diaries, which provided the basis for understanding his comments about the *vox populi*, consisted of sorting his comments into categories. Although I did not discuss this type of analysis in the body of the thesis, I found the data useful to consider as a background when I checked the claims of the historians who discussed Klemperer's opinions. Because the information was subjective and non-specific, I did not consider it appropriate for inclusion in my systematic analysis. In a larger study it would be a useful tool for comparison with other types of analysis.

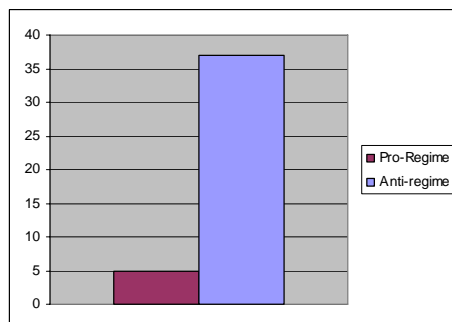
- Support for the regime and/or Hitler e.g.
  - [Resentment against local party policies coupled with support for Hitler]
- Unhappiness with the regime, awareness of problems e.g.
  - ‘So many people come to see [the Aryan director of the library]. First with their arm stretched out, Hitler salute. Then they feel their way into the conversation. Then, when they’ve become certain, the mask falls.’
- Changing attitudes (moving from pro- towards anti-Nazi) e.g.
  - [Visitor tells Klemperer of attitudes in his area] ‘The year before he had still reported a passable degree of contentment. Now he talks of widespread resentment, partly of an economic, partly of a religious nature.’
- Evidence of behaviour not conforming to Nazi system e.g.

- 'Every Jew has his Aryan angel.'
- [Publicly announced instruction to fly flags at half-mast] 'I see with pleasure that in our neighbourhood a good half of the houses are without flags.'
- Fear, suspicion, unease, shame about the situation e.g.
  - 'The people obviously anti-Nazi, but infinitely timid and reserved. The general political mood: a dull yielding, a despondent waiting without hope.'
- Reactions against anti-Semitism

As can be seen in the above list, all regime-supportive comments are lumped into one category, but I attempted to divide the attitudes of discontent with the regime into five categories so that it was easier to discern what might have precipitated the discontent.



**Figure 2: Klemperer's notes on his received impressions of the vox populi, sorted according to type of comment (representative sample only)**



**Figure 3: Klemperer and the vox populi: pro- vs. anti-regime comments recorded (representative sample only)**

### ***Vox Populi* in other memoirs/oral histories:**

Comments equivalent to Klemperer's *vox populi* in memoirs or oral histories were general statements made by the narrators which were not related to specific incidents. I sorted these by the type of behaviour expressed or experienced:

- Loyalty, sympathy or support for Jews e.g.
  - 'If the colleagues were not Party members but were Aryans, they demonstrated a pronounced friendliness to us Jewish colleagues.'
  - 'It should not be forgotten that the attitude of a large part of the Christian population, perhaps the majority, toward the Jews was basically friendly, often kind and sympathetic. We frequently heard expressions of profound disapproval, even strong rejection of the measures taken by the authorities and the Party against us and our friends.'

- Withdrawal from relationship with Jews e.g.
  - 'Within the company itself the Aryan employees behaved decently and in an orderly manner toward the new 'non-Aryans,' but they increasingly avoided being seen with them on the street or associating with them privately. Personal relations with 'Aryans,' even when it was a matter of saying hello on the street and in public, dwindled more and more.'
- Rejection of Jews e.g.
  - 'Father was turned away from shops because of his Jewish appearance.'
  - '[Passersby during the boycott] now wore smiles on their faces and could scarcely conceal their satisfaction.'
- Jews experiencing freedom from harassment e.g.
  - 'With satisfaction I can note that the often expressed concerns of frightened souls . . . never proved justified. Neither the field trips nor the hikes [of groups of Jewish children around Berlin] were ever disturbed by harassment, let alone worse things.'
- Feelings about the regime on the part of non-Jews e.g.
  - 'I saw plenty of evidence of virulent hatred on the part of the Aryan population toward the current brown regime.'

Sorting information in this way served several useful purposes. The systematic, quantitative analysis done for this thesis was experimental and limited, but I compared the general comments with the counted data to ensure that I was at least building a data picture that was representative *of the source* I was using. In other words, narrators would make general comments and provide anecdotes to tell their stories, but it was important to check that the two ways of conveying information were consistent with each other. I also needed to build a general picture of whether the general comments made were reflective of the historians' representations.

Furthermore, categorising in the way shown above not only gave an overall idea of what narrators most often commented on but also paved the way for thinking about differences in categories of source and the way stories were told, for example between essays written while the regime was still in power and oral histories provided decades after the end of the Nazi era.

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